

THE
A B B E Y
OF
C L U G N Y.
A N O V E L.

BY M R S. M E E K E,

AUTHOR OF
COUNT ST. BLANCARD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
ABBÉY OF CLUGNY.

CHAP. I.

THE evening being remarkably fine, and the moon shining very bright, the Marquis, not finding himself inclined to sleep, opened one of the windows by way of enjoying the fresh air, and the prospect before him, which even by that light was truly delightful.—He soon dismissed his servant, wishing to enjoy his own private thoughts.—The windows opened so near the ground, that he could easily have stepped out into a

charming garden, laid out with the utmost taste and elegance.—This province is remarkable for its fine hills and vallies; and as the scene is diversified, and varies every step you take, it is particularly striking to strangers.—The fine vineyards intermixed with standard peach and apricot trees, and the ancient woods, which crown the lofty mountains, whose sides exhibited the finest cultivation, make it charming, beyond description, at this season.

The Marquis looked round him with rapture; but upon raising his eyes, he perceived a glittering light, which shone from among the pines and larches upon a fine hill almost facing him.—At first he hardly knew what to compare it to; but a second glance convinced him it proceeded from the reflection of the moon upon the windows of some large building, that was partly concealed by the trees.—He got upon a chair to take a better survey of it, and perceived several turrets and spires, and the whole appeared surrounded



rounded by a high wall, and soon concluded it was a convent, but could hardly decide in his own mind which was the most delightfully situated, the fine building he had in view, or the Castle he was become an inhabitant of, which stood in one of the finest vallies this delightful province abounds in, bathed by the Saone, and at the foot of the famous Cote d'Or, though he had but a very imperfect view by that light, of all the various surrounding beauties.—There was a very elegant little book-cafe in his apartment; and not being in a hurry to go to bed, he approached it, and took down the first that came to hand: It was a volume of sermons by the celebrated Maffillon.— Finding himself religiously inclined, he opened it, and began to read one, having seated himself near the window.

Time stole away unperceived, and he never reflected upon the hour 'till he heard some bells at a distance; he started up, laid down his book, and began to listen.—The found

proceeded from the large building he had been admiring, he thought ; and upon looking at his watch, found it was just past one ; he therefore had not a doubt now of its being a convent, and by the time of night they were ringing for matins. The Marechal had told him there were some very famous convents in Burgundy, but had not mentioned there being any so near the Castle of Sauvigny ; however, he concluded this one belonged to the rich Order of Carthusian Monks, who were famous for chusing excellent situations.

Baron Wielbourg had often told him religion was the foundation of all noble and generous actions, and that a truly good priest was a most respectable character ; but real piety was very seldom to be found in convents ; monks, in general, were a very despicable set of men, who disgraced the order they professed, by their numerous vices ; for they were all, more or less, hypocrites, tho' some would even triumph openly in violating

ing every vow they had taken ; and it was no uncommon thing to see friars in liquor.—Poverty and laziness were their only inducement to embrace a monastic life, except a few mistaken wretches, whose narrow minds had made them a prey to the grossest superstition and the most infatuated bigotry, who fancied every innocent recreation was a crime, and that there was very great merit in inflicting the most severe corporeal punishments, and subjecting themselves to the most rigorous fasts.—These were as much to be pitied as blamed, the Baron thought, as their errors were the mere result of ignorance ; but he had always desired his dear pupil to shun the company of monks of every denomination.—Brabant was at that time infested with them ; and as they had generally free access every where, they often, by their mistaken zeal, but still oftener by their self-interested views, occasioned the most serious disputes among families ; for these reasons, and because he particularly disliked all the Holy tribe, the Baron never

permitted them to enter the Castle of Wielbourg; therefore he was not without his enemies; but it was very indifferent to him what such people thought of his conduct; he only coveted the esteem of worthy men.

The Marquis had not seen any of the Godly fraternity during his residence at Paris, the famous order of Jesuits having just been abolished; the rest were all, upon their best behaviour.—Indeed, they had never been much admitted among the higher circles.—Smart Abbés had always supplied their places among the great nobility.

Many of the good Baron's notions came across the Marquis's mind while he stood listening to these bells; and had he known the road, and the distance to the monastery, he would have joined the holy congregation, for he never felt himself more inclined to offer his sincere homage to the Deity.—However, not knowing which way to proceed, if he could get out of the garden, and very unwilling to disturb

disturb any body, he shut too his window, and flung himself into bed, where he reflected upon the misfortunes that had befel the owners of the Castle.—What a comfort would it have been to them at their time of life, to have had a son worthy such amiable parents, to inherit their title and immense property, and almost wished he had been that happy man, instead of being the heir to the Duke de Longueville; for he certainly already felt a greater affection for the good old Prince and Princess, than he did for his own father, which he was at a loss to account for, and blamed himself for giving way to such wishes. His father had his oddities, and certainly was not inclined to oblige him in the point he had so much set his heart upon; still he was in many respects very indulgent, and was nearly as great a man as the Prince de Mont-alban, and was thought of more consequence than many other French Princes, whose titles often arise from seats any person might purchase; he could therefore only attribute the sentiment of preference he felt for this

worthy couple, to the particular kind reception they had given him. When the mind has been agitated, it is very rare a person can sleep sound; the Marquis fell into a dose of about three hours, and when he awoke, saw the sun was upon his window.—Not having drawn the curtains again of the one he had opened, he looked at his watch, and saw it was just five, and feeling no wish to indulge, he soon rose to admire the surrounding landscape by day-light; he opened the same window as last night, and now saw the monastery to great advantage.—He soon dressed, but not hearing any body moving, and not knowing his way about the Castle, he stept out of his window into the garden, and having admired the disposition of the walks and plantations, and the outside of the house, which was a very fine ancient regular building, he thought he would see how it looked at a greater distance, but found he could not get out of the garden, or more properly, pleasure-grounds, which extended a considerable way to the right and left, and were

were inclosed by high walls ; but while he was looking about him, he saw a man enter by a small door, which led into a fine young wood ; it was one of the gardeners', who seemed surprised ; he had not seen the Marquis over night, therefore eyed him with some suspicion as he approached ; but his dress and figure commanded respect, and prevented the man from daring to inquire what he did there.—The Marquis asked him a few questions concerning the gardens.—He answered very laconically.—At last his Lordship said,

" Pray what building is that upon yon hill, my good friend ? "

" It is a monastery," said the gardener.

" How far is it from hence," replied the Marquis.

" About a mile and a half," was the answer, and the man walked forward, meaning

to go to his work, but the Marquis desired him to let him out at the door he had come in at. The man hardly knew what to do ; but having looked at the Castle, and discovered, as he thought, the only way such an intruder could have got into the garden at such a time of the morning, and as he seemed to have come out of the window of one of the best apartments, he thought he was most likely a man of some consequence ; therefore, after a moment's reflection, he obeyed the order, and the Marquis ventured to ask him one more question.

“ Which is the road to the monastery ? ”

“ The one to the right will lead you strait thither,” was the answer, and the door was instantly shut, to prevent any further discourse. The Marquis followed the direction he had received.—By the time of the morning, he thought he should be just in time for their six o’clock mass, and should be better able to judge, when he was upon the hill, which of the

the two situations he should prefer.—He walked gently along, and heard the large clock strike six, before he reached the convent.—He was delighted with his walk, and the fine views it afforded, but did not meet any body 'till he came to the last stile, near the convent, at which an old man waited to let him pass.

“ Pray what is the name of this convent, my friend ?” said the Marquis.

“ It is the Abbey of Clugny, Sir,” said the old man ; “ a ladies convent, of the Order of St. Claire.”

“ Are there a great many nuns ?” said the Marquis.

“ Oh ! that convent never wants for nuns, Sir,” said the old man, with a sort of triumph ; “ there is a noble building ; there is a situation—it has not its equal in all Burgundy :—A person may enjoy life there.”

"I was struck with its appearance from a distance," said the Marquis, "which induced me to take a walk, to survey it nearer."

"It was well worth your while, Sir," said the old man; "there is not such another building in the world—at least so all strangers say.—I was born upon the spot, and have hardly ever been ten miles from home in my life."

The Marquis smiled at the honest simplicity of the old man; he firmly believed every thing he said, and that the Abbey of Clugny was as worthy admiration as Versailles.—The praises of it seemed quite habitual to him."

"To be sure," he went on, "of late years things did not go on so quiet as they should have done, at the Abbey, but thank God that is all over now, and it will be greater than ever it was."

As

As the old man seemed very much inclined to be loquacious, the Marquis asked him what had happened of late.

The old man sighed, and said, " Oh! Sir, a very great lady was at the head of it, but she was as wicked as she was illustrious, and thank God she is gone somewhere, to answer for her sins in this world."

" You seem to have your doubts, my friend, whether she has taken the right road; for I presume she is lately dead," said the Marquis.

" Indeed, Sir," said the old man, " I have very great doubts, and so have many more besides me.—She has been dead about three months, but she did not die of old age, as almost all those who have ever inhabited that convent, have done; but she lived long enough to spend a great deal more money than she ought to have done, and has run the house

house very much into debt, which must be paid, you know, Sir."

"Very true," said the Marquis; "I hope the good ladies have been more fortunate in their election this time."

"The present Abbess is the best woman in the world, Sir," said the old man, and will soon repair all the harm the other has done there:—Sir, Look behind you—you see that noble Castle in the valley?"

"Very plainly," said the Marquis, "and have been admiring its situation, which I think, in some respects, preferable to that of the Abbey, because it possesses many of the advantages the latter enjoys, and is not so much exposed to the frequent storms so prevalent in these warm climates."

"Very certain, Sir," said the old man;—but the outside is not what ought to be most admired at the Castle; the best couple in the world

world inhabit it ; it is our lord of the manor's, and the Abbess of Clugny is a relation of his, and I am sure he would not have had her appointed, if he had not thought her almost as good as himself.—The only thing we all regret is, that our dear lord cannot live many years."

" Well, I hope when it pleases God to call so worthy a man away," said the Marquis, " another equally as good will succeed him."

" It cannot be, Sir," said the old man ;— " no one knows who will be his heir.—Oh ! there are strange wicked people in this world. I wish to God our dear lord had never left his Castle ; but if it was not for such clever good men as him, how would the world go on.—He helped to govern the kingdom for many years ; and though we suffered through his absence, we reflected how many millions were profiting by his talents and goodness, but he paid dear for it in the end.—Oh ! Sir,

your

your hair would stand an end, if I was to tell you all I know.—There is a mass going to be said just now, which has been said at half past six every morning for these two and twenty years, or thereabouts.—I forget the exact day upon which it was founded ; but I am sure the Prince would not mind paying for a hundred every day, if that would but restore his long-lost son.

“ Oh ! that wicked Paris — Thank God I never was there ; and it is a pity any good people should ever live in such a vile place ; for it was there our lord lost his favourite son, but do not know how, to this very day. He had two others living then, but they both died soon after ; one fighting for his country, and the other of a violent fever ; and there are frequently very fine services said at the Abbey, and at the parish church of Avalon, for the repose of their souls, and every body, for five miles round, always make a point of attending ; but if you wish to hear the half past six o’clock mass, as you are a stranger, I will

will shew you the way into the church.—I am not in any haste."

The Marquis thanked the old man, and they walked forwards towards the Abbey.—As soon as they arrived in the church, his Lordship's conductor began to point out all the different ornaments to him ; but in a few moments, a tall venerable monk walked up to the great altar, and began high mass, which was chanted by the nuns from within their grate.—The Marquis's eyes were instantly directed that way, but a thick green curtain concealed the holy virgins from every profane eye.—They sung most charmingly, and the Marquis was quite delighted, and thought how far preferable this Heavenly music was to the waring thundering voices of fat cannons and chorus singers, and thought perhaps it was more striking, from the singers being thus concealed ; for as many of them were probably advanced in years, and the young ones were very likely not handsome, the hearing

hearing them thus left a more pleasing illusion upon the mind.

As soon as the service was over, the Marquis thought of returning to the Castle, and put a double Louis into his conductor's hand, as he walked from the altar; for his dress and conversation bespoke him among the class of indigent peasants.

The poor old man was very much surprised; this was a blessing he little expected, when he returned to hear this mass, but for fear the generous stranger had made a mistake, or had not looked at what he had put into his hand, he said,

"Do you know what you have given me, young gentleman," holding it in his open hand.

"Yes, I thought you seemed truly deserving of the trifle I have bestowed upon you," said the Marquis.

"Heaven

"Heaven reward you, young gentleman; I am sure you are a much greater man than I supposed you was, and I am not perhaps quite so poor as I look; I am not in want, thank God, nor never shall be, while our dear lord lives, and the worthy Abbess of this house; but this noble present will afford me an opportunity of being charitable in my turn; for though our worthy lord provides for us all very amply, to the best of his knowledge, still a poor person is often afraid of being thought troublesome, if they happen to want work, or to have a fit of illness, or many little accidents such people as us are liable to."

"Very just, my good friend," said the Marquis; "and since you mean to make such an excellent use of my first gift, there is another, putting a second double Louis into his hand, to bestow in the same way."

"Oh! this is too much, Sir," said the old man.—"God in Heaven bless you; do tell me

me how I can deserve your generous bounty, but that is not possible; allow me to shew you every thing worth seeing hereabouts, as you are a stranger; but perhaps you are come to reside amongst us; God send you may."

"No, my friend," said the Marquis, "I am upon a visit to your worthy lord, and am vastly happy to find he is so justly beloved."

"Oh! Sir," said he, "what are the praises of an old man like me; but it would do your heart good if you was to see us all when we assemble on the fêtes of either the Prince or Princess—But pray excuse my familiarity, Sir; I do not know how to address you."

The Marquis put out his hand, and took the old man's, saying, "no apologies, my good friend; you could not have been more civil, had you known me at first; and I am very much obliged to you for the information you have given me."

They

They now past the Sacristan, a likely youth, about sixteen.—In all womens' convents, the outward churches are kept in order by these lads; they keep all the keys, arrange every thing for the priests, attend them at mass, and commonly go into orders when they attain the proper age.—This youth addressed the old man as father, and bowed very respectfully to the Marquis, who stopped to look at him.

" This is my youngest son, Sir," said the old man; " thanks to my worthy benefactors, he is well provided for; and I bless God is not undeserving of the favours he has met with."

" I am happy to hear it," said the Marquis, putting a six livre piece into the lad's hand.—He then bid the old man adieu, and hurried back to the Castle: He knew no other road into the garden than the way he had left it by, and had very little chance of finding that door open, he tho' -- so had

determined to follow the wall, which would certainly lead him to the high road in front of the house.—However, he was mistaken in his conjectures ; for the gardener, having no doubt, made a few inquiries concerning him, was upon the look out, had his hat off long before he came near, and bowed very humbly as he approached.

The Marquis took no notice, and was determined not to afford the man an opportunity of repairing his unpoliteness, therefore walked into his own apartment by the way of the window again, rung for his valet, and found the family were not yet stirring ; so he remained in his own room 'till he was summoned to breakfast, between eight and nine.

The Prince and Princess made the usual inquiries, in the most feeling and polite manner, and seemed as happy to see him again as they had been over night. The Marquis paid his compliments in his turn ; and having early been taught to speak the language
his

his heart dictated, his speeches evidently pleased those to whom they were addressed.

" Well, how do you like Burgundy," said the Marechal.—" Do you think the account I gave you of it was at all exaggerated."

" Far from it, my dear uncle," said the Marquis ; " I think you hardly did this delightful province justice," mentioning the remarks he had made during his morning excursion, and where he had been.

" Why, I find a winter spent in the capital has not cured you of all your Gothic notions, Alphonso," said the Marechal with a smile, expressive of his approbation.—" I am well convinced there are very few of our present young men of fashion would have quitted their beds to have gone to mass, particularly at such an early hour."

" Very

"Very possibly, my dear Sir," said the Marquis, "but my best friend and preceptor."

"Remember," said the Marechal, "I expect to divide that title with the worthy Baron; for though every moment increases my veneration and esteem for him, still I feel I am half jealous of him."

The Marquis smiled, and said, "I will not offend in the same manner again, my dear uncle; in future I will call Baron Wielbourg my first friend; but he always desired me to follow the impulse of my heart with respect to religion, and not to go to mass merely because it was a holiday, if I did not find myself inclined to say my prayers with proper devotion.—He was an absolute enemy to all forms, and every species of superstition—and often said, a private homage was more acceptable to the Deity than a public one: Now the Chaste Diana brought on a fit of devotion last night—so this morning

ing I went to mass, and the delightful music I heard in the church, quite enchanted me ; and I do think, had I been a lady, I should almost have been tempted to turn nun, for the sake of joining in the Heavenly choir."

" I have often visited, and have sometimes attended divine service at that celebrated Abbey," said the Marechal, " and I think I shall go there once more to return my thanks, where they are most due, for the favours that have been so lately conferred upon me."

The Prince and Princess seemed to participate in the Marechal's sentiments ; and the former said,

" Pray what time was you there, Marquis ?"

" I heard the half past six o'clock mass, Princess," said his Lordship, and was half angry with himself, before he ceased speaking, having reflected upon what the old man

had told him,) for he instantly saw his speech reminded this amiable couple of the unfortunate event it owed its foundation to. They both sighed gently, and looked at each other.

The Prince then said, "I hope your prayers will be more efficacious than ours have been hitherto, my young friend."

The Marechal understood the Prince's meaning, as well as the Marquis, and they all seemed rather embarrassed; but no explanation took place. The Princess asked the Marquis a few questions respecting the road he took, and what he thought of the situation, upon which he bestowed the greatest encomiums.

"Well," said the Prince, "since you are so struck with this monastery, Marquis, suppose we all take a drive there this afternoon, and pay the Abbess a visit; she is a relation of mine, and I flatter myself I have some ascendant over the good lady; and as

you seem fond of fine views, I will solicit leave for you to take a turn upon the leads of the Abbey, from whence you will have a delightful and very extensive prospect."

The Marquis said, "the Prince did him honour, and he should enjoy such an elevated promenade above all things."

"The gardens are also very well worth seeing," said the Princess; "and I am sure we shall be able to obtain our good cousin's leave to take a turn in them."

"True, my dear," said the Prince; "but do not let us forget to tell Father Onuphrious to order all his novices to keep out of the way of so handsome a young man; it is breaking through the rules, to permit any strangers, but especially of our sex, to walk in these sacred gardens; but I am sure we shall not be denied.—However, if we do lead any of the young sisters into temptation, why the sin will lay at our doors."

C 2

"Oh!

" Oh ! I dare say the worthy shepherd will take proper care of his flock," said the Princess.

" Then I will send the Abbess word ; we will drink our coffee with her this afternoon," said the Prince, and thus it was settled.

The Marquis, wishing to hear the Prince and Princess's opinion of the late Abbess, after what he had learnt from the old man, said, " as the altar was hung in black, he supposed some person of consequence, belonging to the Abbey, was lately dead."

" Yes, my Lord," replied the Prince, " the late Abbess died only three months ago, and our relation succeeded her.—We never visited the former one ; she was a scandal to the Sacred Order she had embraced ; and, as I always wish to shew the detestation I feel for such characters, neither the Princess nor I attended her funeral service.

" This

" This was the strongest mark of disapprobation her past conduct could have met with, as these worthy people were so much beloved ; and it being a compliment the lords of the manor generally pay to the memory of the deceased upon such occasions, it was no wonder her name was held in absolute abhorrence by the common people, who inhabited the surrounding villages.

This unfortunate woman's despicable character was canvassed during breakfast, and the morning was spent in shewing the Marquis all the pictures, and other curiosities the Castle contained.

C H A P. II.

SOON after dinner, the Prince, Princess, Marechal, and the Marquis, sat out in the Prince's coach and six for the Abbey.— The coach road was much further about, and the Marquis found fresh beauties to admire. The Prince and Princess were both delighted with his remarks, and said, “ they had lived so long upon the spot, that they wanted the company of such agreeable friends, to enliven them, and to point out to them the advantages

vantages they enjoyed ; therefore hoped his Lordship would often repeat his visits, since he was so partial to Sauvigny, though they knew their society did not offer the same attractions his did."

The Marquis said, "they might attribute his visits to whatever motives they chose, for he was determined to profit by the kind invitation he had received."

They now drove into the great gates of the Abbey, and were sat down at the foot of the stair-case that led into the Abbess's apartments.

Her parlour was very spacious, and very elegantly fitted up.—A large grate separated her from her visitors, but had none of the gloom convents in general display.

The Abbess seemed very much a woman of the world, totally free from the pride and bigotry such ladies are in general renowned

for.—She was about fifty, and was dressed with all the elegant simplicity her order permitted; seemed excessively happy to see the Prince and his party.—The Procratress, and two other nuns, soon made their appearance, each eager to pay their respects to these noble visitors. After the usual compliments were over, the Prince informed his cousin of the promises he had made the Marquis; first, that he would obtain her permission for him to take a turn upon the leads; and secondly, that she would allow him to admire the beauties of their garden; he therefore hoped his good cousin would not only ratify the promises he had made, but would also use her influence with their holy father, to enable him to keep his word.

“ You know, my dear cousin,” said the Abbess, “ both Father Onuphrious and myself think you confer a favour, when you deign to ask one; and I think you never need fear a refusal; for I would positively almost

almost break through our strictest rules, rather than disoblige you."

"I find you wish to make me vain in my old age, cousin," said the Prince.—"However, I am very happy to find I stand so high in your good graces."

"If this noble company find themselves inclined to take a survey of our garden now, my good cousin," said the Abbes, "I will send word to the mother of the novices, to take all the children out of the way, as it is their hour of recreation, and it would be wrong, you know, to expose them to temptation."

"I entreat the ladies may not be deranged upon my account," said the Marquis.—"Though I really think, were we to meet them, I should run the greatest risk; for was I to lose my heart, I should have no resource left in such a case, but to turn friar."

"Oh ! I think I would undertake to plead your Lordship's cause myself," said the Abbess, " rather than allow you to make such a sacrifice ; for my novices are not permitted to take their last vows for eighteen months, and the handsomest among them has not yet taken the black veil."

The Abbess's attendants left the room to make the necessary preparations for this walk ; and as soon as the good lady was alone, the Prince smiled, and said,

"I think you told me, cousin, the last time I saw you, that you had two or three of the handsomest young ladies under your protection you ever beheld ;—but one in particular, your last comer, how does she do ; is she likely to embrace a religious life ?"

"She is, indeed, my dear cousin ; and I am sure she will be a true saint, for her mind is still more lovely than her person.—Our holy

holy father assures me she is a charming young creature."

" Nay, now you have raised my curiosity," said the Prince; " cannot you contrive to let her fall in our way by accident.—I think there is a sort of selfishness in your wishing to conceal so lovely a girl from our sight, while there is a chance left of her being happy in the world; and I know of no person so deserving an angel as my young friend here."

The Abbess laughed, and said, " she had not seen her cousin so gay for some time, but was certain the young lady herself would not be prevailed upon to remain in the garden, if she knew there were gentlemen coming into it.—Adding, I really never saw so sincere a vocation in any young creature."

" But pray have you discovered what induced so handsome a young woman to seek such an asylum," said the Princess.—" You told me, I think, you were as yet ignorant of

her motives, when you first mentioned her to me."

"Nor am I at any absolute certainty now, Princess," said the Abbess; "I am averse to putting questions to her that might afflict her; but from some hints I have received from our holy father, I believe she has met with a disappointment in the world."

"In love, I presume," said the Prince—"I thought that was the case, and I think it was very wrong in her to take such a rash step in consequence.—I have not so high an opinion of the sincerity of her vocation as you seem to have, cousin; though I make no doubt of the purity of her intentions, and the innocence of her heart; therefore I should wish to inflict a very severe punishment upon her inconstant swain."

"But pray," said the Princess, "are you at liberty to disclose who she really is yet?"

"Indeed

"Indeed I am not, Princess," said the Abbess; "but I believe I may venture to say this much, she is not a French woman."

All the company looked rather surprised; and the Marquis said,

"He was astonished a foreigner had chosen a situation so distant from the frontiers."

"Oh! that is very easily accounted for," said the Abbess.—"She does not wish her retreat should be discovered; and depend upon it—it never will, while she chuses it to remain a secret; but she is so fearful it should, that she would pronounce her last vows to-morrow, if our order permitted it."

"I am afraid she construes the enthusiasm of an exalted mind into a wish to quit the world, cousin," said the Prince: "And whether she is to be pitied or blamed, I think you cannot be too careful in examining the state of her heart, before you allow her to take those

those irrevocable vows that can never be recalled, and which are too often followed by fruitless repentance."

"I own, upon reflection," said the Princess, "I think the lady is to blame, whatever may have been her motives for the rash step she seems to have taken, without the consent, or even knowledge, of any of her friends.— If she is conscious of having forfeited their esteem, she may certainly think the sacrifice she wishes to make, a sufficient expiation of her fault; but even in that case, she surely ought not to place such an eternal barrier between herself and family, without their approbation; for whatever may have been her errors, she may not be less dear to them."

The Princess evidently spoke feelingly;— and the Marquis, wishing to give the conversation a gayer turn, said,

"Pray, how old is the young lady, ma'am?"

"Just

"Just one and twenty, my Lord," said the Abbess.—The Marechal shook his head, and said,

"That is a very dangerous age to make rash vows.—For my own part, I put off the evil moment as long as I could, before I tied myself down to eternal celibacy ; but an excellent Commandery offering, I resigned myself to my fate with a tolerable good grace."

The Princess said, "it is a great pity any nun is allowed to profess before thirty."

"I am afraid these houses would not fill as they do, in that case," said the Prince.—"What say you, cousin?"

"Why, I must own, my good, cousin," said the Abbess, "the generality of us take the veil before five and twenty."

The Marquis had been reflecting upon what he had heard concerning this great beauty,

beauty, and was very curious to know something more about her, as her not being a French woman had struck him very forcibly:—But then what countrywoman was she.—This the Abbess had not chose to mention.—There was a possibility, though it was very improbable it should be the person, of all others, he wished to see.—He had not heard from the Countess de Verneuil.—“ Just one and twenty,” he repeated to himself:—“ Beautiful to a degree—and her mind corresponds with her external advantages.—She certainly bears some resemblance to my adored Alphonsine.”

“ Why, Marquis,” said the Prince with a smile, “ I am afraid we have talked you into love with this fair damsel.—I should not wonder if you had half a mind to try to conquer the aversion she seems to have taken to our sex.—Suppose you give the Marquis an opportunity of exercising his charitable disposition, cousin ; I dare say he could be as eloquent

eloquent one way as Father Onuphrious could the other."

"Upon my word, cousin," said the Abbess, "I never saw you in such high spirits; but it is really very wicked in you to encourage the Marquis to commit an absolute robbery, by depriving me of my favourite child."

The Marquis seized this moment of gaiety to put a question to the good lady he was very anxious to have resolved.

"Is the young lady fair or brown, ma'am?"

"Upon my word," said the Abbess, "there seems a combination against me and my lovely charge; I do not think it will be prudent to answer such dangerous inquiries."

"Nay," said the Prince, "can there be a more simple question.—I assure you I do not

not know whether my young friend prefers a Brunette or a Madona, so one word may efface the favourable impression your encomiums have made upon his mind."

"I protest I am equally anxious to know what sort of a beauty this young lady is," said the Marechal; "it is so natural to feel one's self interested in the fate of a very handsome young woman."

The Prince and Princess fairly laughed the good lady out of her scruples.—At last she said, "I believe the young lady is what is called a fair beauty; for she has dark blue eyes, and fine auburn hair, which she has not yet parted with, as she only wears the white veil."

The Marquis coloured, and the Prince protested he was fond of fair ladies.

The Princess said, "she was afraid this discovery had made bad worse."

The

The return of mother St. Mary put a stop to their railing, and she informed the company the gardens were at liberty ; therefore a Touriere was called, as these holy nuns could not have accompanied the party, it being contrary to their order for them to address a gentleman, except from behind a grate ; so the visitors were conducted by a short stout clumsy figure, whom no one could wonder, as the Marquis observed, that had been tempted to turn nun.—The Prince laughed, and said, “ to be sure she did not bear much resemblance to the handsome lady they had heard described.”

The gardens were very spacious, and well laid out, but not so striking to the Marquis as those he admired in the morning, belonging to the Castle ; for the amazing high walls which surrounded the latter, robbed them of great part of their beauty, as they totally excluded the fine views the hill afforded ; but those he was to enjoy from the leads.

The

The Princess leant upon the Marquis's arm, and pointed out every thing to him.—“To the right,” said she, “is the novices quarter, and to the left the professed nuns.”

The Marquis thought he could not see too much of the former; it was very remarkable, if none of these young ladies had any curiosity:—But none of them appeared at the windows; and he reflected they might stand so as to see the company, and yet not be seen themselves: He therefore seized every opportunity of taking a glance that way, while he affected to be looking at something else.—The Princess asked his opinion of the garden, adding, “we will return by the inner cloisters, which are allowed to be remarkably fine, and surround a very pretty parterre.”

The Prince and Princess would have been satisfied with one turn round the garden, but having asked the Marquis if he chose to take a second, his curiosity got the better of his natural

natural complaisance, as he longed more than ever to catch a glimpse of this famous beauty, but was not more fortunate than before ; he therefore gave up all hopes, and they entered the cloisters by a large Gothic door, over which was a figure of the virgin and child.

The cloisters were spacious, and truly Gothic ; in excellent repair, and totally surrounded the inner court of the monastery.—The Tourierc, willing to shew them all the Lyons, conducted them into the refectory, which was to the right, and into the inner church, which was to the left ; but they merely took a peep into the latter, as there were two nuns seated in sight of the door, one on each side.—A sort of coffin stood upon trussels, covered with a black velvet pall, upon which laid a very large white cross.—The pall touched the ground on both sides. This was placed exactly over the late Abbes's grave.

The

The Touriere told them the very day, hour, nay, the very minute on which this lady died. She dropt down in a fit during vespers, never spoke afterwards, so died without any of the sacraments. The Touriere shrugged up her shoulders several times during her recital, as much as to say, it was a just punishment inflicted upon her for the bad life she had led ; for she had frequently been ill latterly, but nothing was a warning to some folks, she said.—This empty coffin and pall would not be removed 'till the day and year on which she was buried, and was watched all day by nuns, and during the night by the novices, two and two, turn about, who were always supposed to be at prayers for the souls of the deceased ;—and each nun, when they entered the church, were obliged to sprinkle the pall with holy water, and to say a *requiem in pace*.—Added to these constant prayers, two low masses were said every day before twelve o'clock, to deliver the deceased from purgatory, as it was strongly supposed her holy life did not en-

title

title her to go to Heaven immediately, and it was much doubted whether these pious endeavours would have the desired effect in the present case.

The Marquis listened very attentively to the prolix narrative ; and as they moved forward, the Princess said,

“ Now, what think you, Marquis, of these holy sisters paying such great respect to the memory of a person they must despise.”

“ Why I really think it is very absurd, Princess,” said the Marquis, begging the good lady’s pardon ; “ but do not you think these prayers and ceremonies, if they place any faith in them, are in some respects temptations to them to violate their sacred vows with impunity ; for they have as great reason to believe the prayers of their survivors may save them, as that theirs can be of such essential service to their late Abbés.”

“ A

"A very just remark, my dear child," said the Princess; "my age will authorise and excuse my style, I know; but you ought to recollect these nuns were not educated by Baron Wielbourg, nor have any of them half the understanding of his pupil; but perhaps they think, if they perform all the duties they have allotted themselves with cheerfulness and resignation, they shall not require the prayers they bestow upon others."

The Touriere now led them through a large pair of folding doors out of these cloisters into some others, which communicated with the outer court.—These doors were very seldom opened, she said, except for the reception of a nun, as the gardeners and workmen, when employed, always came in, and went out, through the churches.—They now returned into the Abbess's apartment, and the Marquis then went, attended by the Sacristian, to the top of the house, to admire the fine views it afforded.—The lad, who was very intelligent, and who had already
felt

felt the good effects of the Marquis's generous disposition, pointed every thing out to him.—The Marquis made him another present, when he had satisfied his curiosity, and joined the company in the parlatory, where he partook of some refreshments, and about seven they all took their leave.—During their drive home, the conversation naturally turned upon what they had seen and heard.—The beautiful novice was not forgot.—The Marechal said,

“ I am afraid the young lady's enthusiasm will furnish her with an ample source for repentance, before she is aware of the error she seems to have committed.”

The Prince said, “ I wish the Abbess would have been more explicit concerning her, for there appears to me to be a strange mystery at the bottom; perhaps the young person does not come out of a Catholic country, and that may be one reason for all this secrecy.—She is no doubt a woman of

some consequence, or she would not have been so readily received into the monastery ; therefore time will most likely discover what has brought her there."

The Princess sighed, and said, " if her parents did but know where she was, I should be perfectly easy ; but as matters are, I will see her, if possible.—I know the Abbess will grant me the favour ; but perhaps the young person may be averse to receiving strangers. However, if I am so fortunate as to succeed to my wishes, I shall certainly take the liberty of giving her my advice very freely ;—for it is the interest of nuns to inflame the minds of young people when they are seized with these romantic notions ; and if I can prevent her from taking what I am afraid, all things considered, will be rash vows, why I may have as great merit in trying to save the living, as the good sisters have in endeavouring to save the dead."

The

The Marquis sat very silent, listening to the Princess, whose generous notions met with his warmest approbation;—but he could not get rid of the idea, that it was possible this much-admired novice might be his Alphonsine.—He could not recollect any friend of the Baron's in this part of France, or he should have concluded his benefactor had sent his niece to this Abbey, as the most agreeable asylum of that kind.—She had given strong proofs of her wish to take the veil at Malines; and though the Baron had such a dislike to nuns and friars in general, if he really thought her vocation sincere, he might have been prevailed upon, perhaps, at least to permit her to enter upon her noviciate; but then why all this mystery, the Baron was not fond of dissimulation; and what could induce him to wish to keep his niece's intention of taking the veil so profound a secret; and why was this young lady so fearful of being discovered.—Could Alphonsine have reached the Abbey unknown to her uncle, and did she take all this pre-

caution to prevent the good Baron from discovering her, he never was more perplexed; his not having heard from the Countess was almost a certain proof.—Alphonsine was not at Wielbourg; then where could she be gone; her uncle was uneasy, the house-keeper had told him, because he had not heard from her: Every thing tended to increase his suspicions; his absence was remarked several times during the course of the evening; he tried to laugh it off; the Princess said, she would not take his Lordship to the Abbey any more, for she really thought their afternoon's visit had left a disagreeable impression upon his mind.

However, soon after supper, as he had rose very early, they persuaded him to retire.—The Marquis was not averse to the proposition, as he wished to be alone; and as soon as he had dismissed his valet, he opened his window as before; for he had not the slightest wish to sleep; and moon-light being the finest time in the world for meditation, he
stept

stept out of his window, and took a turn for an hour or more upon a fine terrace, that ran along that side of the house.—He saw lights in the different apartments of the Castle ; but as the curtains were all drawn, he could not be seen.—On his return to his room, he passed by a window which was open, and near his own :—He heard his name pronounced ; it naturally caught his attention ;—and, as he was walking upon turf, it was impossible for the speaker to hear the sound of his footsteps.—It was the Prince who was speaking, and who now said,

“ What a sacrifice you exact, Marechal !”

The Marquis would have thought it much beneath him to have listened at any other time ; but his mind was in such a state of perplexity, that knowing himself to be the subject of the conversation, he thought he might gain a hint from their conjectures ;—and the hopes of hearing the name of Ma-

demoiselle de Cheylus rivetted him to the spot ; and he heard his uncle say,

“ Consider, my dear friend, how impossible it would be to make such a matter public, suppose the Duke de Longueville —.”

A little breeze, which flapt the curtain, made the Marquis lose the rest of the sentence :—He was startled.—When the mind is agitated, every thing alarms.—What could this mean ! and how came his father and himself to be concerned in it.—He involuntarily stept rather nearer the window, and soon heard the Prince say,

“ My dear friend, his countenance alone is a sufficient proof.—You know it is, as well as I do ; every feature, word, and action, reminds me of my long-lost and much to be lamented Lewis.”

The Marquis fairly trembled with anxiety, and was more at a loss than ever to conjecture
what

what this meant. It was certainly him they were talking of. What strange mystery still hung over his head ; he now reflected upon the kind reception he had met with from the Prince and Princess ; the great precautions his uncle had taken before he brought him to the Castle ; the Princess having called him her dear child that very afternoon, though she had excused herself immediately. In short, his mind was upon the rack, and he remained in the same position for some time ; but the Prince and his uncle having retired from the draft of the window, he could not hear any more : So more puzzled than ever he had been in his life, and unable to understand what he had heard, he retired into his own room ; but at last Alphonsine de Cheylus came across his mind, and changed the train of his ideas, and he came to a resolution to see the beautiful novice at the Abbey of Clugny, in defiance of every obstacle he might have to encounter.

C H A P. III.

WE must now return to Alphonsine de Cheylus. The sudden and abrupt departure of her Alexis was such a thunder-stroke to the lovely girl, that all her uncle's kind consolations were of little or no avail. Every thing at the Castle of Wielbourg became odious to her, as every thing reminded her of her lover. She thought any place would be preferable to this once favourite spot, and at last obtained the Baron's permission

mission to go to Malines. She had already formed the intention of quitting the world for ever; and the kind treatment she met with in the Beguine convent, soon made her decide to take the veil there immediately, if her uncle would but consent to her wishes. Her good relation had already formed plans for her succeeding her in the honourable post she held; she had now become her confident. Alphonsine told her how cruelly she had been deserted; what had past between her and her uncle upon the occasion; and that he had commanded her to give up all thoughts of the Duke de Longueville's son and heir, and she had made a solemn promise never to marry any other man; therefore, the sooner she retired from the world the better. She was encouraged to persist in these pious sentiments; and the kind cousin, who had but little doubt of bringing the Baron over to their way of thinking, set about the arduous task with the greatest alacrity, and Alphonsine seemed to enjoy a sort of momentary triumph over herself. Alexis

would learn she had buried herself in a cloister upon his account, and would then regret the woman he had so easily forgot, and had once pretended to adore. She gloried in her own passion—and in the convincing proofs she meant to give her lover of the sincerity of the vows she had made, she had often been told, by her own sex, not to put too much faith in man; and she was now certain there was not one capable of loving as she did, though constancy was in her catalogue of virtues. The Baron had told her the promise he had exacted from his pupil, never to attempt corresponding with her, and the Marquis had strongly adhered to his word. Now, in the first place, she thought she should not have been prevailed upon to make such a promise; and in the second, as it would have been, in a manner, extorted from her, she would have thought herself very excusable in breaking it, and was convinced she should have found out twenty ways to have let her Alexis have heard from her.— Many more of these ideas came into her mind, while

while she remained in suspense at Malines ; but the Baron's appearance, who came, as has been already related, to fetch her away in person, put a strange check to the fine system of immortal love and constancy she had formed. The kind cousin was also very much disappointed, to find any body could withstand the powerful arguments she had made use of, and parted very reluctantly with Alphonsine, who was more melancholy than ever, when she returned to the Castle, sensible she had, in some respects, incurred her uncle's displeasure ; though he treated her with the utmost kindness, and only entreated her to take a couple of years to reflect upon the privations a monastic life would expose her to, and the serious and irrevocable vows she wished so hastily to pronounce ; and how could she do so, with any propriety, he asked her, while her heart still retained a preference in favour of her lover ;—disappointments, like the one she had met with, carried many a romantic girl into a convent, and made many a miserable nun.—The world had

still many consolations in store for her; he by no means wished her to marry yet;—but surely his friendship and society ought to be as agreeable to her as the interested caresses and fawning flattery of a set of ignorant selfish nuns, who, if they really had loved her, would not have persuaded her to construe a mere fit of caprice into a solemn call to abjure the pomps and vanities of this world.

Thus argued the worthy Baron; but his discourse had no longer the same charms for Alphonseine, nor had his arguments the same weight; and since he had ordered her to forget Alexis, sure he ought to have permitted her to seek for consolation from religion, and to bury her sorrows and herself within some cloister.—However, listless and unsettled, and disliking the Castle of Wielbourg more than ever, she proposed visiting her gay aunt.—What past upon that occasion, has been already related: The worthy Baron accompanied his still disconsolate niece

to

to Bruxelles, and put her under the care of a Madame de la Porte, a Flemish lady, whom he had long known, who had married a lawyer of great reputation, a resident of Dijon, in Burgundy, but who had been dead some years, and his widow had returned to Bruxelles among her family.

This lady, it has been said, was going to Paris, which was very true, but she did not mean to make any stay there, as the real purport of her journey was to place her youngest daughter at the Abbey of Clugny.—She did not mention her intentions to the Baron, having often heard him express his disapprobation of convents in general. She was not able to set out for two days after the one she had appointed, and the Baron, having some business that required his attendance at Wielbourg, took an affectionate leave of his niece, desiring her to write to him often, and returned home again.

During

During the three days Alphonsine resided at Bruxelles, her wish to seclude herself in a convent returned with double force. Victoria de la Porte, who was going to take the veil, painted the charms of a monastic life in the most glowing colours.—Alphonsine listened to her discourse with rapture, and began to think happiness was rarely to be met with in a turbulent and deceitful world.

Madame de la Porte was a very religious lady, and excessively superstitious.—She had worked her daughter's mind up to this pitch of enthusiasm, thinking it was a very acceptable sacrifice in the eye of Heaven, to devote one of her children to the service of God.—She therefore thought it would have been a very great sin to oppose so sincere a vocation, as Alphonsine evinced to embrace a religious life, in her hearing, which was greatly strengthened by what she learnt from her daughter:—So the evening before their intended departure, the old lady questioned her fair travelling companion very seriously upon
the

the wish she had so often expressed to take the veil ; and being perfectly satisfied with her answers, she consented, at the unhappy girl's earnest request, to permit her to accompany her daughter to the Abbey of Clugny (which, according to her account, was a second paradise upon earth), instead of leaving her at Arras, as had been agreed upon.

Alphonsine knew what would be the consequence of her uncle having a suspicion of this new arrangement, therefore got Madam de la Porte to promise not to mention the name of the convent she was to become an inhabitant of, 'till she had put it out of her uncle's power to remove her from this sacred asylum.

Had the good lady reflected upon her return to Bruxelles, and the thanks she would most probably receive from the Baron, when he saw her, she would most likely not have permitted her devotion to have carried her such

such unwarrantable lengths; but as she meant to spend a few months at Paris, at a sister of her late husband's, upon her return out of Burgundy, therefore, having little chance of seeing the Baron for some time, her thoughts only rolled upon the meritorious action she was going to perform; but there was a very essential point, which she did not forget to mention to Alphonse, that she could not be received at first without some trifling acknowledgement.—This reflection by no means deranged the infatuated victim's plan: She had upwards of fifty pounds in money, and jewels of more than twice that value, some of which her mother had left behind her; and the others were presents she had received from her uncle at different times; therefore, upon a fair calculation, Madame de la Porte found there would be plenty, and the Baron would no doubt be generous, when he found he could not help himself.

This

This worthy man little thought what plots and contrivances were going on, and kept flattering himself with hopes that his niece would meet with some amiable man in the Countess's brilliant societies, that would eradicate her religious notions, and rival the Marquis de St. Cernin in her good graces.

Every precaution this female trio of devotees could think of, was taken to prevent a discovery of their intentions. Alphonsine wrote, as has been already mentioned, to her aunt, from Bruxelles, to prevent her from writing to Wielbourg, and put a letter into the post-office, as they went through Arras, for her uncle, in which she merely said she would write again soon.

The three travellers arrived, without any accident, at the Abbey of Clugny, and Madame de la Porte introduced Alphonsine to the Abbess, and informed her of her story.

This

This lady, though really a most excellent woman, could not think of remonstrating with the lovely girl.—She attributed the whole to her innate piety, congratulated her upon the heroism she displayed, in wishing to bid adieu to the world so early, and received her immediately among the number of her novices, as well as Victoria de la Porte; so that the pious lady, who had conducted them both thither, having seen them enrolled among the holy sisterhood, set out upon her return to Paris, and Alphonsine entrusted her with a letter for her uncle, which she was to put into the post-office there, to prevent his forming any conjectures as to where the convent she had chosen to end her days in was situated.

This letter had not reached the worthy man when the Marquis was at Wielbourg; and Alphonsine must have strangely forgot the love he had always shewn her, the care he had taken of her education, and the kind affection he had constantly treated her with, before

before she took a step so contrary to his inclinations, and in such a clandestine manner, in the letter she gave Madame de la Porte, she merely informed him she had retired into a convent, where she was determined to take the veil, as she was tired of the world, and all the pleasures it afforded ; and when she had taken her last vows, he should hear from her again ;—and that Madame de la Porte was not to blame, and she would explain every thing to him when she had put it out of his power to oblige her to leave the holy sanctuary she had chosen.

Love and enthusiasm are the only excuses that can be found for Alphonsine, as she certainly possessed a most sensible feeling heart, and was by no means deficient in point of understanding.—She concluded by saying, she would think of some means of hearing from him, and only hoped he would forgive the step she had taken.

The

The Baron was excessively hurt, when he received this letter, knowing too well in what her devotion originated ; but if she kept her word, and his letters reached her, he would make one more effort to dissuade her following the dictates of mistaken zeal, and an exalted romantic imagination ; and if he did not succeed, she must e'en follow the bent of her own inclinations.

Alphonsine had been about a month at Clugny, when the Marquis arrived at Sauvigny.—Convents, in general, are the abodes of ignorance, error, and superstition, and it is the interest of many people to keep them so ; but the death of the late Abbess, which, as has been already mentioned, happened suddenly, afforded the nuns an inexhaustible fund for conjecture and conversation.—Her not having received the Sacraments, or the Holy Oils, was looked upon as a certain punishment for the wicked life she had led, and as a warning to them all, not to fall into the errors, not to say crimes, that had disgraced her

her profession, and the Abbey she superintended.

Several very scandalous stories were propagated in the neighbourhood, and many people did not scruple to say openly, she could not rest in her grave; but these furies were soon brought to a much greater certainty, by a terrible omen, which occurred on the very day of the week she died, nay, at the very hour, and most likely at the very moment.—This was nothing less than the Easter taper, or *Cierge Paschal having fallen down, which occasioned a terrible alarm to the nuns then upon duty. This was by no means attributed to accident, or to the awkwardness of the nun to whom the employment of placing it had been assigned, but solely to the Abbess's laying so near it.

* A long thick wax candle, in point of shape something like a flambeaux, only of a considerable length, ornamented with gilt flowers, and which is placed in all women's convents, facing the great altar, on Easter day, and is not removed till Whitsunday. In cloistered monasteries, it is placed in the inner church, facing the grate.

And

And from this moment, the nuns who watched heard strange noises, and sometimes groans.—The lamp, which ought always to have burnt without intermission, at the feet of the virgin, often went out, which had very rarely happened before, except when the virgin was supposed to have been offended by the shocking example this indiscreet Abbess had set the sisterhood; but now it frequently burnt dim, and sometimes cast a blue shade, nay, sparks, sometimes flew out of it, towards the nuns upon duty, and no one ever quitted their post, and related what they had heard or seen, but the next made similar observations.—In short, every concomitant circumstance convinced the sisterhood their prayers were not very efficacious, which they could only attribute to the troubled conscience of the deceased.

The novices, whose imaginations were far more inflamed than the venerable mother's, always entered upon this duty with the greatest reluctance, and approached the grave with fear

fear and trembling.—Nay, it was almost become a scruple of conscience, whether they ought to persist in their prayers, all things considered.

The Confessor, a rigid superstitious narrow minded Cisterian monk, to whom all these dreadful omens, portentous sounds, &c. were related with a few trifling exaggerations, rather confirmed than dissipated the general alarm ; though he assured them they had nothing to fear, and it was their duty to persist in their pious endeavours ; they must sing a *Dei Profundis* every three hours, and he would have two additional masses every day ; for which purpose, he should send for two Franciscan monks from a convent about a league off, who should assist him in his holy labours ; he therefore hoped, very speedily, to quiet the perturbed spirit of the wretched sinner, and to calm their present fears.—There was not a dissenting voice to this arrangement, and an extraordinary lamp, fresh trimmed, was ordered to be placed under the image of

St.

St. Claire, the patroness of their order.—Every day, in short, teemed with prodigies, and the terror was nearly as great in the village of Avalon as in the convent.—It was hardly looked upon as safe to pass the church after dark, and the Abbess was frequently seen in the neighbouring woods under different shapes.

Such was the situation of affairs at the Abbey of Clugny when Alphonsine and Victoria became inhabitants of it.—A general assembly was held in the Abbess's apartment the evening of their arrival, and strict orders were issued not to alarm the new novices, by any of the silly stories then in circulation, and they were to be excused from entering upon the disagreeable duty of watching the grave, 'till they were thoroughly accustomed to the house, and then should not perform this task together.

The present Abbess by no means countenanced these daily reports. Whether she really gave credit to them or not, is best known

known to herself; but she knew how much the propriety of her house depended upon their being stifled, if possible.

Secrets of such importance, especially when in the possession of so many females, are seldom kept very strictly; so notwithstanding the Abbess's orders, these terrible stories were told, by degrees, with the strictest injunctions, not to reveal from whom they learnt them, to the two strangers; but all those who had seen or heard any thing, never felt the least dread, and argued very learnedly upon the benefits arising from a holy life, and a clear conscience.

If the two young ladies were alarmed by what they learnt, they had prudence enough to conceal it.—There was no chance of retreating honourably for either.—Victoria was much the most frightened of the two.—Alphonse had been early taught not to dread those supernatural gentry, termed ghosts and spirits; and though she did not attempt to ar-

gue the nuns out of the prepossessions they entertained, of having often seen and heard the troubled spirit of their departed Abbess. She was convinced, in her own mind, the whole was merely the effort of imagination, and arose from sitting in a gloomy church, upon such a melancholy occasion; but courageous as Alphonsine was, she was excused from this irksome duty much longer than she expected, and she thought it necessary to make a general confession, and to take the Sacrament on the day before she was to watch, which she was to have done on the Thursday, after the Prince and his party had visited the Abbey.—The mother of the novices had a vast deal to say to her upon the occasion, and took great pains to fortify her mind.—The Abbess and the Confessor both preached to the same purpose, and all three affected to laugh at what they all in reality believed; but as Alphonsine's whole story was known to the two latter, they foresaw great benefits might arise to the convent through her means, and they had promised her

her every indulgence their order, and the rules of their house, permitted.—As there were now nine novices, of course there was an odd one, who could neither perform this duty, nor could she be totally exempted, without occasioning murmurs among her companions; therefore the Abbess told Alphonse, she should have one of the nuns to bear her company, who had been accustomed to the task, and whose piety was irreproachable. Alphonse was obliged to appear flattered by this kind mark of attention, tho' she would have preferred the society of her young friend, knowing herself to be much the most courageous of the two.—It was the rule for the novices to watch from the last service, called the Salut, 'till Matins.—They always supped at six o'clock, and went to salut at seven; and as soon as this service was over, every one retired but those who were going upon duty, 'till matins, which were sung at one o'clock; at which time the nuns relieved them, who watched in turns, 'till the same hour came round again.

On the appointed day, it was observed Alphonsine did not eat as usual, at dinner, and looked rather low spirited.—Her mother anxiously inquired into the cause, she said she had merely got a trifling cold. Trifles are sometimes seen in a very serious light, and no mother was ever fonder of her children than mother St. Agnes was of her novices. Nothing could be attributed to her dear child's fears; such an idea never entered her head; but the Abbess and Confessor were informed of Alphonsine's indisposition, and all agreed it would be very imprudent to permit her to sit up in the cold church; therefore the arrangements for the night were altered; Victoria and another novice were to supply her place, not much to the satisfaction of the former, but there was no appeal; she therefore, as soon as salut was concluded, found herself in the church, with a companion not more courageous than herself.

Four wax tapers were burning round the coffin, which the two novices approached with fear

fear and trembling, and flung themselves upon their knees, one on each side, beginning to recite the prayers for such occasions.

They never quitted this posture 'till the clock struck nine, and the last bell rung to warn the nuns to retire to their respective cells. By this time all their prayers were finished, and their eyes met across the coffin, and every thing having remained totally silent, they were able to address each other in a low voice, and agreed to rise — Sister Frances, who had been upon this duty several times, was, or affected now to be, quite courageous, so said, let us take a turn about the church, to stretch our legs, I am quite cramped.—Victoria readily consented, after asking if it was permitted, and being answered in the affirmative, they began to walk backwards and forwards, arm in arm, from the coffin to the altar, and continued to talk in a low voice.

At last they were bold enough to advance to the grate, which separates the inner from the outer church, and to put by the green curtain which conceals them from the eyes of the public.—One solitary lamp illuminated the body of the great church; therefore it was almost impossible to distinguish any thing; all was buried in the most profound silence; but on their return, Victoria chanced to stumble, owing to the edge of one of the stones in the pavement being a little raised, and with trying to save herself in her fright, she fell down, and pulled her friend after her. The church, having a fine dome, their fall resounded from side to side.—They were instantly enfolded in each others arms, determined not to be carried off one without the other. After laying for some minutes in this situation, trembling, and unable to speak, they raised their heads and looked round them; nothing was to be seen or heard.—At last Sister Frances was able to say, “what was it?”

Victoria

Victoria could not tell, but something had caught her foot.

"But the noise; did not you hear a noise?" said Sister Frances.

"Yes, I heard the sound of footsteps, both from within and without," said Victoria;—let us go to prayers."

They each took their station.—Sister Frances, with unsteady hands, seized the brush laid in the holy water, and ventured to sprinkle the pall; they then each said an *Ave Maria*, and falling upon their knees, as by one accord, they prayed most devoutly for an hour or more, when they began to be tolerably composed, and Victoria said, she believed it was only a stone she had stumbled over. In short, they tried to persuade each other it was nothing after all. One thing led them on to another; and as they would not have dared to have talked of any thing profane in so sacred a place, they reverted to

the different stories they had heard related by the nuns.

These reflections were by no means calculated to fortify their minds ; but they could not lose sight of the idea that troubled them, though each begged the other to change the discourse several times ; but they could talk of nothing but hollow noises, the rattling of bones, dimness of lights, &c. when the clock struck eleven.—Though every little thing startled them, they were very happy to find the time of their deliverance approached ; — but the clock had no sooner ceased striking, than a much more terrible sound assailed their ears, for they evidently heard the sound of footsteps at a distance. They looked at each other for some seconds.—Amazement and terror visible upon each countenance, and breathless with horror and anxiety—

“ Merciful Heaven !” exclaimed Sister Frances ; “ did you hear it again ?”

“ Yes,”

"Yes," said the frightened Victoria, "I am sure I heard footsteps then, if ever I did in my life.—Which way did you think the sound came from?"

"From the outward church," said Sister Frances.—"There again," and they both fell upon their knees once more, saying, "this is not fancy, however."

They never prayed with more fervour in their lives, than they did for the ensuing quarter of an hour, 'till Sister Frances reflected they might have made a mistake in the hour; in that case, it was the Sacristain in the outer church putting every thing in order for matins. This thought rather recalled their scattered senses; still they continued their devotions, looking round them every now and then, but saw nothing, and all the stones seemed firm. The only thing they could not reconcile themselves to, was the hour.—They had both counted the clock, and it was very remarkable they should both

have been mistaken :—Besides, it was always before twelve that the nuns had heard these strange noises.

They would have ventured to have taken their seats once more, if a still more terrifying event had not occurred, which they both attributed to the disturbed spirit, who was no doubt returning from her nightly rambles ; for a small arched door, in one corner, which led into the large church, was tried to be opened with great precaution. From the stillness which prevailed, they could have heard a mouse, had it walked across the church, much more a door that creaked upon its hinges.

Their eyes were raised from their books, and once more met across the coffin.—Tho' fear had almost suspended their faculties, still they were convinced this could not be the Sacristain ; he never entered at that door at such an hour ; and he would have called from without, had he wanted any thing ; but the

door now evidently gave way, and opened by degrees.

Sister Frances was kneeling with her back towards it, and fearful of being seized from behind, she started up, and hastened round the head of the coffin, caught hold of Sister Victoria, who had also risen, and they now both stood facing the door from which the noise proceeded, and began to look round them, to see which way they must run, but dread and uncertainty prevented them from moving, and they still kept their eyes steadfastly fixed upon the fatal door, which, as it was at some distance, very small, and in a very dark corner, they were uncertain, for some seconds, whether it was open or not, 'till they perceived a very tall figure, in the act of stooping to come in, which seemed to grow to an immoderate size, when within the church, and was, to all appearance, wrapt in a winding sheet; but whether it absolutely came in at the door, whisked through the key-hole, or rose out of the ground in that

very spot, they could not take upon themselves to decide; but this they did know, that it advanced some steps, and they both took to their heels, and ran to the other extremity of the church, then faced about, their hands clenched in each other; but their terror exceeded all description, the moment they turned their heads; for all the lights fell to the ground, and the ghost vanished.

They were now almost in total darkness, as no other light remained, but what proceeded from the two small lamps already mentioned, at the feet of the virgin and St. Claire, and they were nearly extinguished, but blazed out at intervals; as if even these inanimate lights partook of their dreadful agitation; however, the moment they lost sight of the ghost, they fell upon their knees, and began to return thanks for this wonderful escape; and Sister Frances stretched herself out to kiss the ground.

This

This alarmed Sister Victoria, who thought her companion had fainted, and she dared not have moved either one way or the other alone; but to her great relief, she soon rose again, and was able to ask Sister Victoria how she did.

"Oh! I never was so terrified in my whole life," said the trembling Victoria.—"I only wonder I survived the dreadful shock."

"I am sure so do I," said Sister Frances.
"But do tell me what you saw."

"Why, an immense tall figure, all in white," said Victoria.

"Aye, in a shroud," said Sister Frances; just what I saw; it was the Abbess.—She was very tall, but she looked much taller than when she was alive, I thought."

"Oh! Heaven! was ever any thing so dreadful.—If I had known, I would not have watched,

watched, let what would have been the consequence," said Victoria.

" You must not talk so, my dear sister," said her companion.—" But what must we do now, all the lights are overturned."

" Oh ! I do not know what to advise," said Victoria ; " but do you really think it was the Abbess."

" Oh ! I have not the smallest doubt, my dear ; I should have known her shroud again any where ; but her face was so covered up, I did not see that very well.—She certainly was returning to her grave.—What a whisk she must have come with, to put out all the lights."

Do you think she went down into the grave ?" said Victoria.—" I thought she went back again to the door."

They

They were not able to settle this point to each others satisfaction, but agreed not to stir from the spot where they were, 'till the bell rung for matins, and never to watch again without the Confessor, who ought now to take some serious measures to quiet this disturbed spirit.

Sister Frances said, “she was not permitted to approach the virgin, or their holy patroness, else she would no doubt have put those lamps out, as she had done the other lights.”

They kept forming conjectures and resolutions, 'till the wished for bell began to ring. No reprieve was ever more joyfully received. This welcome found quite revived them, and they began to pray as soon as they heard the nuns advancing down the cloister in a body, but did not move.—The door opened close behind them, and the leader of the Holy tribe stept into the church; but the second step she took, she stumbled over the legs of the frightened

frightened novices ; fell forwards with a most horrid shriek, and carried the noses of the sisters to the ground with her.

The devout assembly were in the utmost consternation ; but as most of them had little wax tapers in their hands, with which they light themselves to and from their cells, some of them were fool hardy enough to say, they would see what was the matter, and the mother of the novices was the first to advance, as she had always affected not to believe in ghosts and spirits, and had laughed at the various reports in circulation—it was necessary to give a proof of her courage.—She called out, my dear children, why, how come you here ? and helped to raise them.

As they were alive, several more ventured to their assistance ; and mother St. Martha, who had occasioned all this bustle, was restored to her feet as well as the novices. An explanation now took place, and each of the mothers had so many questions to ask, that it

it was some time before the novices could tell their lamentable story, which their audience listened to with every mark of terror and dismay; and some of the mothers declared, they approved very much of their conduct, only wondered they had not sought a refuge in the cloisters.

In short, no one wondered at their having quitted their post, when the phantom advanced, but it would be necessary to discover what depredations this spirit had committed; and they hardly knew whether it would not be proper to summon the Abbess and Confessor upon such an important occasion, as the former very seldom attended matins, and the latter never; but this motion was overruled, and they advanced with their tapers, six a breast, with very cautious steps, expecting every moment to stumble over a scull, or some other horrid object.

At last they came within two steps of the grave, and each light was stretched forward.

The

The sight before them but too well confirmed what the sisters had said, though their terrific looks, and ghastly countenances, were sufficient proofs of their veracity.

The lights were all overturned, and lay upon the ground ; the coffin was bare, the pall having been pulled off, and thrown under it ; and the story of how they were kneeling, and how the Abbess (for there was not a doubt of who the ghost was) appeared, was repeated with additional circumstances, and heard with redoubled horror by the surrounding group.

The mother of the novices desired every thing might be restored and picked up.—She took up the first taper herself; and at last the pall was replaced, and the lights set up round it ; the service was performed as usual, though not with much attention, as the nuns thought more of the ghost than their prayers.

As all danger, for that night, at least was supposed to be over, the two nuns, whose turn it was to watch, staid behind, unwilling to shrink from so sacred a duty, though it would have been very excusable in the present instance.

The other nuns and novices retired to their cells, as Alphonsine had not been thought well enough to watch.—She had also been dispensed from attending matins; she therefore remained in ignorance of the fresh and serious alarm that had occurred, 'till they all met for the six o'clock mass.—The Abbess and she were then made acquainted with the terrible adventures of the night.

The Abbess was, in some respects, to be compared to a general at the head of an army, which has revolted, and refuses to obey the word of command, and was as much at a loss how to act: To give ear to the story (tho' she really believed it was not devoid of foundation, from the repeated circumstances she had

had listened to before), might prove the ruin of her house ; yet the disturbed spirit, if such a thing really had appeared, was past endurance, and its pranks could no longer be kept a secret ; so something must be done, and she must consult her holy father ; however, she thought it was best, for the present, to persist in her former sentiments ; therefore began, by gently reproving the two novices, and said,

" She could not help attributing a great deal to their fears : They had talked of ghosts and hobgoblins, 'till their terrified imagination had induced them to fancy they saw one. As to the candles having all fallen down, that might very easily be accounted for :—When they heard the creaking of the door, as they supposed, they had rose hastily, and overlet the lights, and, in their fright, had caught hold of the pall, which they had pulled off. And as for the phantom they fancied they had seen, it was merely their own shadow, which seemed high or low, as they advanced

or

or retreated.—However, to convince them she could not give any credit to their stories, she would watch herself in the evening, with one of the novices in turn."

The Abbess prided herself excessively upon this able harangue, particularly as she perceived she had been able to dissipate some part of the consternation which prevailed, and mass was performed and heard with rather more devotion than matins had been; after which, Victoria retired with Alphonsine, and repeated the story more in detail, concluding by advising her very strongly not to watch, except with the Confessor.

Alphonsine, who was really very courageous, and having heard the Abbess's remarks upon this strange story, was rather inclined to disbelieve her frightened friend, and tried to laugh her out of the notion she seemed still to entertain, of having seen a ghost, upon the ground of what the Abbess had stated.

But

But Victoria was not to be persuaded ;— she had been mistaken, and gave her friend so many convincing proofs of her veracity, that Alphonsine was rather staggered, and the rest of the sisterhood could not help thinking something terrible would be the end of all this.—However, if the Abbess did not watch, according to her promise, they agreed upon making a general remonstrance against the duty, at least during the night.

The Abbess was also taking her measures to restore tranquillity among the community, if possible.—She therefore sent privately for Father Onuphrious, to whom she related the recent adventure, and her conduct in consequence. He was not less anxious than she was, to support the credit of the house, tho' he certainly had, in some respects, countenanced the first reports he had heard, and had his doubts whether the late Abbess did not sometimes take a nightly perambulation ;— for he had always allowed such things were possible, and had often told the nuns they ought

ought not to be surprised at the noises they, heard, when they considered the wicked life the late Abbess had led ; and he hoped her untimely end, added to the idea they all entertained of her not being able to rest in her grave, would deter them from following so wicked an example ; and he always concluded these consoling lectures, by assuring them, good and virtuous people had nothing to fear from evil spirits.—However, he now was very desirous of dissipating the general alarm he had, in some measure, created ; for if the report got spread abroad, that the Abbey was haunted, they should not get any more novices, but even those that were there would most probably refuse to take the veil. Therefore, having duly considered what would be the most proper method to pursue, in the present case, the Father desired the Abbess to assemble all the nuns, novices, &c. and to leave every thing to him, merely entreating she would tell him the story she had heard before them all, as if she had not seen him, and ask his advice how to proceed.

The

The Abbess readily consented to his proposal, and in about an hour afterwards, she assembled the whole sisterhood in her apartment, and sent for the holy father; told him the story, as had been agreed upon, and what her determination had been, in consequence of what the novices had told her.

The holy father commended the Abbess's pious intentions very much, and then delivered a most learned lecture, to prove the folly of being alarmed at supernatural appearances; and concluded, by saying, he should not think of the Abbess hazarding her health, or having her rest broke, through such nonsensical notions; he meant to watch himself alone, to convince them all how little he dreaded the terrible phantom, which the two novices had conjured up the preceding evening, and he only hoped they would not attempt to trouble him with their idle fears, after he had given them such a proof of the little credit he gave to their silly stories.

The

The Assembly now broke up, and many of them prayed most fervently, that the holy father might be punished for his incredulity; so many of them could not be mistaken;—and his studied harangue had by no means effaced the impression the novices story had made upon their minds.

As soon as the old fellow reached his own apartment, he wrote a note, and dispatched the Sacristain to the two Franciscan friars already mentioned, who frequently assisted him in his holy functions at the Abbey of Clugny; he desired they would be at the Abbey in the evening for salut; but if it was absolutely out of their power to attend, he entreated they would send him two of their brethren. He then set out himself for the Castle of Souvigny, where he frequently visited, and sometimes dined, and he thought it very possible this story might reach the Prince and Princess's ears: He knew what had already been reported; therefore these additions, if they got abroad, might add to the alarm;—

and he could tell the story in very favourable terms, laugh at the folly of the novices, and display his own courage, by mentioning what he was going to do, to quiet all their fears.

C H A P. IV.

IT was between twelve and one o'clock when Father Onuphrious arrived at the Castle. The day being very warm, the Prince, Princess, and their guests, were in a small pavilion in the garden, in the middle of a high shrubbery, which made it truly delightful at this season ; for wherever the sun broke through the intervening branches, it

it was totally excluded by Venetian blinds, which reached to the ground, and through which the air circulated very freely. Men of Father Onuphrious's order and consequence, seldom stood upon much ceremony ; and when he was informed where the noble owners of the mansion were, he bent his steps thither.

The Princess was knotting ; the Marquis was reading to her ; the Prince and Marechal were engaged at chess, and were in the most interesting part of their game, when Father Onuphrious knocked at the door of the pavilion, and made his appearance, before any one could speak — He had not been told there was company, which he pleaded as an excuse for his abrupt entrance, and bowed very respectfully to every one present.

The Prince desired the holy father to take a seat, and the Princess told him, they had not seen him for some time, therefore he must stop and dine with them.

The father had no doubt settled this point in his own mind before he set out, as it was so warm a day, and might think it necessary to fortify himself as much as possible against the evening : He therefore bowed assent to the Princess's kind proposal, and said he hoped what he had to allege would plead his excuse for having absented himself so long from the Castle.

The season had been very sickly, and his time had been so much taken up in fulfilling the duties of his station, that he had really hardly been able to dispose of a single hour for the last three weeks ; was exceedingly sorry he was not at home on the day the illustrious company present honoured the Abbey with their presence, but that very afternoon he had taken a much longer walk than usual ; he had been to confess and comfort a poor peasant upon his death-bed, and had had the satisfaction of leaving him quite reconciled to his fate.

The

The Princess paid him some compliments upon his humanity and consolatory talents ; adding, the indigent were certainly more entitled to his company than they were. The Marquis had of course ceased reading, and the Prince and Marechal having finished their game, the conversation became general, and the father soon reverted to the subject uppermost in his thoughts, and gave a very circumstantial detail of the occurrences of the preceding evening.

" Poor things," said the Princess, " how I pity them.—I suppose they had heard the silly stories which are propagated in the neighbourhood, so went into the church prepared to hear and see something dreadful, and most likely mistook the rustling of the wind in the cloisters for this phantom. I should not wonder if it was to occasion a serious fit of illness to some of these young people.—I really think, father, you ought to devise some means to calm their apprehensions ; for I dare say your church will soon be deserted ;

the neighbouring peasants are even now afraid to approach the Abbey after dusk.

"When these absurd stories first began to be circulated, Princess," said the father, in a solemn tone, "I did all in my power to stifle and contradict them; but as I have not been fortunate enough to succeed, I have thought of other means to discredit them, and to prevent any more such ridiculous reports in future."

He then mentioned the lecture he had just given the nuns and novices, touched upon the heads of it, to display his eloquence, and said, it was his intention to watch alone that very evening; and if this did not convince them how puerile and silly their apprehensions were, he would watch with those in turn all round, as he was determined, if possible, to quiet their fears, which he must say were rather excusable, when he considered the enormities the late Abbess had committed, for he really

really thought it would be wonderful if she rested quietly in her grave.

" Then you do believe, father, there are such things as ghosts," said the Marquis.

" I cannot say I ever saw one, my Lord," said the holy man, with a look as much as to say, I hope I never shall; " but since some saints have been allowed to perform miracles after their death, why should not sinners be doomed to walk the earth."

" What! to frighten the innocent and good, father?" said the Marquis; " surely the Giver of all Goodness would not suffer that!"

" Without arraigning the wisdom of divine Providence, my Lord," said the father, " I must say I think it is very probable such things are permitted; and for my own part, I believe every thing possible; therefore, may not these supernatural appearances be intended as warnings to the good, and to convince

us what punishments we may expect, if we deviate from the paths of virtue."

" Like you, father," said the Marquis, " I believe the power of the Omnipotent to be unbounded, and his ways inscrutable to us poor mortals ; but I must see and speak to a ghost, before I believe in one."

The Prince and Marechal both laughed, and the latter said,

" I am as great a sceptic as my nephew ; I must have ocular, nay, palpable proofs, before I put any faith in spirits."

" But you are not afraid of these troubled beings, I hope, father," said the Prince.

" I never entertained the slightest apprehension of such things, Monseigneur ; as a proof, I mean to watch the late Abbess's grave alone this very night."

" You

" You will certainly give an undoubted proof of your courage, father," said the Marechal ; " but if you positively do believe in ghosts, and that there is any danger in the undertaking, may not your bravery be called rashness, I have long been a soldier, and have seen some men who have been daring enough to march up to the mouth of a cannon, when there was every reason to suppose the attempt would prove certain death ; that is what I call rashness : I therefore think you had better have a companion ; two living men are surely sufficient to conquer a spirit ; but there is no knowing what might befal one."

The friar thought the Marechal was very serious in what he said ; he therefore agreed,

" His Grace's comparison was a very just one, in some respects ; but as prayers were the only weapons he should use in this case, he hoped he should be able to lay the troubled

spirit, if such a thing did appear, without any assistance, and these matters certainly ought to be narrowly searched into; many a hidden crime had been thus discovered by one person, when the presence of a second might have prevented their being disclosed."

" I should be sorry to differ in opinion from you, father," said the Prince, " because I have a very high opinion of your piety ;— but I do think, whenever, or wherever these supernatural appearances have been seen, they might, had those who discovered them but possessed sufficient courage, have been accounted for in a natural way."

The Marquis said, " if people really were permitted to leave their graves, it was most likely the lady was upon her return thither, which had occasioned the alarm over night, and there was no knowing wh^o Sister Victoria tumbled over."

A good deal more discourse past upon the same subject before dinner, and the holy father convinced his audience he firmly believed it likely wicked people were not permitted to rest quietly in the ground; and soon after coffee, he took his leave, rather hurt to think he had not been more successful.—Had the Prince and Princess been alone, he had little doubt but he should have convinced them of the force of his arguments; but the Marechal, who had been a soldier all his life, was not to be argued out of his notions; of course thought but little of his courage, and he had brought the Prince and his nephew over to his way of thinking; however, he did not give up the hope of gaining great applause, by what he was going to do.

To his great joy, he found his two Franciscan friends at his apartments.—He was particularly happy to think they were not engaged, for they were two merry souls, who loved good eating and drinking better than

praying ; and though no one could look more devout than Father Onuphrious himself, when performing this sacred duty, or among the nuns ; nay, in short, wherever he visited, he was very much of their way of thinking.—The Franciscans were much younger than he was, therefore very able to defend him, in case of danger ; and they were always ready and willing to oblige him, because they were sure to meet with good cheer, when they visited him.

Nuns think they can never shew enough respect to these holy men who direct their conscience, and Father Onuphrious had always a stock of the very best Burgundy.—Whether they owe the indulgences they meet with to love or fear, must remain a matter of doubt ; but it is certain these Confessors have it in their power to inflict very severe punishments upon their penitents.

Father Onuphrious acquainted his friends with what had past, and the determination he
had

had formed ; adding, he meant to spend a jovial evening with them ; as sitting up of nights is part of the trade of a monk, the Franciscans merely thought of the pleasure they should enjoy, and the excellent wine they should be regaled with.

The Confessor told them, he should conduct them privately into the inner church, as he did not wish the nuns, or any one, to know of their being there ; and it would be an easy matter to keep their watching with him a secret : The Sacristain would suppose they were gone, and he would let them out himself before matins ; he therefore left them in his apartments while he attended salut ; this was always at his own option, but he wished all the nuns to see how ready and willing he was to enter upon the task he had allotted himself ; he gave them all his blessing, and leave to retire as soon as the service was over ; double locked and barred the door that led into the cloisters after them, to prevent the spirit from getting back that way, if it was

upon

upon its rambles.—All being safe, he went and fetched his two companions; they all three entered the church, through the small arched door that has been already described. The Confessor locked it after them, took the key out, and laid it upon the coffin. They now took their seats, and mumbled over a few prayers, for mere form sake; for none of them were very devoutly inclined. This ceremony, or rather farce, being concluded,

“ Now, my dear brothers,” said Father Onuphrious, “ I will raise the spirit, lifting up the pall, and pulling out from underneath a tolerable sized basket, quite full of bottles, bread, veal, ham, &c.

The Franciscans enjoyed the sight of such kind of ghosts, they said: A cloth was spread upon the coffin, and the provisions for the evening were set out, it made an excellent table, they observed.—They eat and drank very plentifully in silence, and the evening began to close in; but as the spirit of the
wine

wine mounted into their brains, they began to talk in rather a louder key.

One of the Franciscans, who was renowned for his prudence, asked Father Onuphrius if he was sure all was safe, and that there was no danger of being overheard.

" I took care of every thing as well as ourselves, my brothers," said the pious monk; " the nuns never enter the inner cloister after eight o'clock, and I have sent the Sacristain to bed, thinking he might be fatigued with the long walk he has taken."

" Aye, aye," said the other Franciscan, " let our brother alone, all is as silent as the grave, and we may give way to our mirth, for none of the peasants dare approach the outside of the church at this time of night; and ten to one if they could hear us, if they did.—Besides, they would only suppose it was the spirits making merry."

In

In short, they were all in high spirits, and each tried to say something very clever concerning ghosts and hobgoblins.—Six empty bottles were standing upon the coffin, and they were drawing the cork of the seventh, when the clock struck eleven.

The Confessor had allotted three bottles for each, and thought they should have finished the ninth before the bell rung for matins.—They had filled their tumblers, and had begun a chorus, when the small arched door, which they had got the key of, laying before them, flew open with such violence, that it made the very church shake.

The three holy friars all started up at the same instant, and their eyes were directed that way.—One was seated at the head of the coffin—the others on each side of it; but they soon arranged themselves on the farther side, facing this tremendous door, and in about five seconds, they saw something, as it were, rising out of the ground, just within it, and their

their eyes remained fixed upon it, 'till they supposed it was about ten feet high; and when it seemed to have ceased raising itself, it made three steps towards the coffin, and shook its head, but was not nearer the valiant monks, for they retreated backwards faster than it advanced.

Its ghastly appearance was truly dreadful; and its large head and cross bones, imprinted upon its forehead, left them no doubt of its being an inhabitant of the other world.—It stopt while they made these observations—then made the church shake once more with the violent stamp it gave its foot, and instantly advanced with such strides, that they thought every one would have reached them; therefore ran as fast as they could to the door that led into the cloisters, which they unlocked and unbolted, but, to their great terror, the joint efforts of all three could not get it open; and while they were thus employed, a most dreadful crash behind them made them all fall upon their knees, near
the

the door they were trying to open, and in an instant they found they were in utter darkness : The spiteful ghost having the assurance, once more, to put out the light, and even by this time both the lamps, and had vanished in a moment.

Their fright and terror certainly exceeded what the two novices had felt ; for they had the additional dread a guilty conscience is sure to occasion.

For a quarter of an hour, or more, a profound silence prevailed, though they now and then heard each other sigh and tremble ; and at last Father Onuphrious was able to stammer out,

“ Oh ! my brothers, was there ever any thing to equal this.—Let us pray : ”

Which they all did, with much more fervour than before supper, for near ten minutes, when the Confessor again said,

“ What

"What must we do, my brothers?"

"Leave this c—s—d place as fast as possible," said the Franciscans, both in a breath; "I must have seen thus much to have believed it."

"Well, do not let us be rash," said the Confessor; "it is wrong to swear in so sacred a place; let us try the other door."

They took hold of each others hands to advance, and made as great a circuit as they could, not to approach the coffin.—They fumbled along by the side of the wall, 'till they found the arched door, but, to their great astonishment, it was locked, and just as they had left it, to all appearance.—They all agreed they thought they saw it open;—but if ghosts had such power, they ought not to wonder at any thing: They had laid the key upon the coffin; but as they presumed the Abbess had pulled the pall off in her rage, it would be useless to attempt to look

look for it in the dusk.—The fact was, they dared not approach the grave ; but as there was no other way by which they could get out, they had no resource left but to ring for the Sacristain.—There was a bell which communicated with his apartment, without the convent, in case the nuns wanted any thing, and they pulled it several times before he answered it.

In the first place, they thought he was most likely fast asleep ; and in the next, that he was a long while dressing—but to their great joy, at last they heard him advance. There were two keys to this door, one of which the Confessor had in his possession, and the other was consigned to the care of the Sacristain. The youth approached the large iron grating which separated the two churches, and having apparently forgot the Confessor's intentions of watching himself, called out,

To
“ What is it you want, ladies ? ”

“ A

"A light, my child," said Father Onuphrious; "it is I am upon duty to night, and my two friends would keep me company."

"I declare I forgot you was there, father," said the lad, "but I have got my lamp in my hand; only let me in:—What! have all the lights been put out again?"

"They have, indeed, my child," said the father, "but I cannot let you in; for I do not know where to find the key in the dark; but stop, here is the lamp hung at the feet of St. Claire; you can light that through the grate, raising the green curtain for that purpose, and letting it down again, as soon as he had got the light, not wishing the Sacristain to perceive what divinity they had been sacrificing to; but they now perceived this was a terrible malicious ghost; the coffin was totally bare, but the grave was closed up again; the pall had been dragged to the foot of the altar, and the bottles, glasses, in short every thing

thing which was standing upon the coffin, were now strewed about upon the floor ; the bottles were all broken, and the remainder of the wine was running about the church.— They were shocked at the confusion this turbulent spirit had occasioned ; but this light gave them fresh courage ; their first search was for the key of the door, but no such thing was to be found, and the clock now struck twelve, which permitted the nuns to come into the church, if they chose ; but as the holy father watched, and they were not very fond of the duty, they hoped to have time to put things a little to rights ; for it would be very derogatory to the Confessor's sanctity, were they to behold the church in its present situation.

The Sacristain, therefore, who had waited by the Confessor's orders without the grate, was ordered to bring his key of the arched door, to put it through to them, and then to go round by the great gate into the inner cloisters

cloisters to watch, that none of the nuns came upon them unawares.

The lad instantly went to execute the orders he had received ; and while he was gone for his key, they all set to work, to pick up the empty bottles, and to arrange the pall, lights, &c. The wine they mopt up as well as they could, with their handkerchiefs. The Confessor entreated his friends would keep all that had past a profound secret ; for if the novices heard of it, they would indubitably run away, and the nuns would get themselves transferred to some other convents of the same order, which is practised now and then, and by this means, the finest Abbey in all France would be totally abandoned.

Before the Sacristain returned with his key, they went again to examine the other door, but they could not conceive how it was fastened, which it seemed to be without side.— The lad now called out at the grate, so Father

ther Onuphrious took his key, and desired him to go round into the cloisters immediately, and see what was the matter with this door.

As it was some way round, and as they were still busily employed in picking up the fragments, they hoped to have got every thing out of sight before the Sacristain could get to them, admitting he was able to open this door, which they very much doubted—but in less than three minutes, he entered by the cloister door.

One of the Franciscans, who was picking up the pieces of broken glass from under the coffin, thinking it was the ghost returned, not supposing the lad could have come round in the time, gave such a sudden start, that he fairly overset coffin, lights, and every thing, once more, and was buried under the pall.—Father Onuphrious, and the other Franciscan, thought the ghost had risen out of the grave; but the lad, who easily guessed

what the monk's fright had proceeded from, and knew what he had taken him for, could not look serious.—His apparent courage revived the other two, and the Confessor asked him what he saw to laugh at.

The lad said, “he believed Father Peter had taken him for a ghost, because he had got his white surplice on.”

As they wished now to secure him in their interest, he was not reprimanded, as he would otherwise have been, but was desired to assist in replacing the coffin.]

Father Peter had bruised his head and shoulders, and grazed his shins, therefore heartily wished he had not partook of this feast, which had terminated so tragically, and through which he was now become so material a sufferer.—His two brothers raised him between them, and each tried to comfort and console him ; and the Confessor promised to

give him something to rub his bruises, when they returned to his apartment.

The lad was able to do more in five minutes than they had all done in a quarter of an hour; so the church was very soon once more in order; and if there were a few pieces of glass remaining, he was to take care not to let them be seen, when he swept the church. Father Onuphrious was very sorry he had been obliged to put the lad thus into his secrets; for he was not his Confessor; the curate of Avalon had brought him up, and had still the care of his conscience, therefore the reverend father had but little power over him.—Besides, it was the Prince that had placed him in the convent, so it was not in the father's power to dismiss him, while he behaved well, nor even for a slight offence, without consulting Monseigneur.

These reflections by no means pleased the reverend monk; but as all that remained for him was to make the lad his friend, he therefore

therefore now asked him, in a pleasant tone, how the door he had entered by was fastened.

"It gave way to my hand, father," said the lad.—"There are no fastenings on the outside, you know, and as you had unlocked and unbolted it, it was easy enough to open."

"Well, this is truly wonderful," said the father, making the sign of the cross; "but after what we have witnessed, we ought not to be surprised at any thing."

He now let the two Franciscan monks out by the arched door, and desired them to wait for him in his apartment; he would soon join them.

He then desired the Sacristain to accompany him round the cloisters, that they might see whether all was safe there; for he could not conceive how this door could be fastened and opened again, all in a moment.—They

walked very cautiously round, and found every thing as it should be.

There were five doors that opened into these cloisters ; the one went into the church, the next, to the right, led into the burying ground, where all the nuns, under the rank of Abbess, were buried ; another led into the garden ; a fourth into the interior of the convent ; and the fifth went into the outer court. All these doors were fast, as the Sacristain had locked the great door he came in at after him—so they returned into the church, and the father approached the coffin once more, to lay the cross upon it, which, in their bustle, had been forgot, when, to his great surprise, and additional terror, he found the very key he had been searching for high and low, laid in the very same place where he had put it, after having locked the door.

“ Well, this is still more astonishing than all the rest,” said the father ; “ see, my child, this key was certainly conveyed away by the evil

evil spirit ; and as you helped to arrange the pall, you must know it was not here when we left the church ; and how it came here now, God only knows ; but so it is, however.—I desire, as you value my future friendship and protection, you would never mention, either what you have seen or heard, not even to your Confessor ; for the consequence of such reports getting abroad, may be very serious.”

The lad promised to obey his injunctions, and the father, having took his station near the coffin, dismissed him, and about one all the nuns arrived in a body, many of them not expecting to find their holy father alive. However, he was certainly still in being, and upon his knees, with his back towards them, when they entered : He rose as they approached, and hoped now they would not attempt to impose upon him again, with any idle stories of ghosts and noises ; they must now be convinced there was nothing to fear.

The two novices were hurt to think their veracity was thus impeached, and asked the holy father if he really had not seen or heard any thing.

The father was rather embarrassed, and wished to avoid telling a falsity, if possible, for fear the ghost should wish to be revenged upon him ; therefore, without answering their question, he said,

" I see you are not satisfied now—what must I do next, to convince you of your error ; I cannot watch every night."

The Abbess, who, out of compliment to her reverend father, was now at the head of her nuns, and no longer having the same fears since he had watched, said,

" I mean to watch myself to night ; and after I have also taken this trouble, merely to quiet your absurd fears, I shall be seriously offended,

offended, if I am troubled with any more complaints."

This speech silenced every one, and the Abbess kept to the resolution she had formed, and watched that very evening with one of the mothers.—Every thing remained perfectly quiet; they neither saw nor heard this turbulent spirit, that had so much deranged the monks the preceding evening; therefore the Abbess absolutely began to think she had been in the right, when she told the novices they had been frightened at their own shadows.

Father Onuphrious was not the least anxious to learn whether this malicious ghost had also appeared to the Abbess; he therefore entered the church by half past eleven o'clock, under pretence of inquiring after her health, which he was very much afraid would suffer, by this excess of complaisance to her nuns.

The Abbess assured him she was perfectly well, and had neither been disturbed by groans or phantoms.

Her looks added strength to her words, and the father was convinced she had been more favoured than his companions and him were, and rather attributed the appearance of the spirit, and the anger it had displayed, to his own duplicity, and almost came to a resolution to reform his private life.

The Abbess then told him it was Alphonse's turn to watch ; her cold was much better, and she could not think of granting her any further indulgence.

The Confessor agreed that it would be wrong, as it might create a jealousy among the other novices ; but though she was certainly very courageous, the timidity of another novice might alarm her particularly, added to the silly stories both them and the nuns were still so full of ; he should therefore wish the Touriere should watch with her, who

who was a woman of known courage, and who had never put any faith in the reports the nuns were so industrious to propagate; and as Alphonsine was an odd sister, her watching with Sister Anne would not appear at all strange, and would be deemed a far less indulgence, than were she to be associated with one of the mothers.

The Abbess agreed the father's was a very just notion, as what that young lady would say among her companions would have far more weight than any thing coming from either of them, so it was settled Sister Anne should be her companion.

The Touriere was the Sacristain's aunt, and, like her nephew, had always laughed at the frights and fears of the nuns, and never made any scruple of going alone into the outer church at all hours: nay, had often openly said, she did not believe in ghosts.

In the course of the morning, Alphonsine was sent for into the Abbess's apartment, and was told of the arrangements for the evening, both the Abbess and Confessor giving her to understand this was a favour that would not have been conferred upon any other novice, only they would not have her alarmed or agitated by the absurd notions the young sisters had got into their heads, though they were convinced of her courage and excellent understanding, and they were certain she would do all in her power to eradicate the silly prejudices many of them had formed, and to laugh them out of their childish fears.

Alphonsine thanked her reverend mother and holy father for this fresh proof of their regard for her, and assured them she was not at all afraid of entering upon the sacred duty, but was very happy they had chosen a companion for her, who was, by all accounts, still more courageous than herself; therefore the Touriere was ordered to hold herself in readiness

ness for the evening.—Sister Frances and Sister Victoria hoped Alphonsine would meet with some adventure similar to theirs, which some of the nuns rather began to disbelieve.

C H A P. V.

AT seven o'clock, Alphonsine and the Touriere took their station.—They had been informed what prayers they were to say, which they began as soon as they were alone; and having finished the task imposed upon them, they took their seats near the head of the coffin, and began to talk upon indifferent subjects.—The old Touriere could

tell some tolerable good stories, when she was in the humour, which happened to be the case that evening, and Alphonsine was vastly pleased with her companion—and eleven o'clock struck before they found the time hang heavy upon their hands ; but the danger, if any there was, now drew near ;—for these strange appearances and noises had always been seen and heard before midnight, and Alphonsine could not help looking round her now and then ; but the Touriere tried to amuse her, and to attract her attention, 'till a gentle tap upon the iron grate, between the two churches, quite startled her.—She instantly jumped up, saying,

“ Bless me, what's that ?”

The Touriere took her by the hand, saying, “ do not be alarmed, my dear sister ; it is only my nephew, I dare say, who wants to speak with me ; I will look through the grate : Come along with me, if you are afraid. You see I am not frightened.”

Alphonsine

Alphonsine summoned all her courage to her assistance, and said,

“Nor I neither; so go and see what it means.”

The Touriere went to the grate, drew up the curtain, and called out, “is that you, Paul?”

“Yes, aunt,” was the answer.—“You have got my key, han’t you; I cannot find it any where.—I have brought you something.”

“Why did not you bring your light,” said the Touriere.—“The great church is quite dark.”

“I know the way very well, aunt,” said the lad; “and I thought my lamp might frighten the ghost.—Besides, they are seen best in the dark, you know.”

The

The Touriere laughed, and said, “ there never was such a boy ; he was not afraid of any thing.”

“ Open the door,” said a voice, which Alphonse still took for the Sacristain’s.

“ In a minute,” said the Touriere ; “ you will not be afraid of the ghost’s coming in, sister,” she went on, laughing.—“ I dare say all those we shall see will be very kind to us, and will most likely bring us something to raise our spirits.—If I had thought of it, I would have put a bottle of *hypocras* in my pocket, in case we were frightened.”

“ I assure you I am not afraid,” said Alphonse, attempting to join in the laugh ;—“ so pray let your nephew in.”

The Touriere now unlocked the door, and called out, “ here, Paul, come along ; are you alone.”

“ No,”

"No," was the answer, and at that moment a most elegant figure stept hastily forward, and flung himself at the feet of Alphonsine.— She was standing, and her eyes had followed the Touriere ; therefore she had a full view of the person as he advanced, and rather retreated before he fell upon his knees, and caught hold of her hand, while his eyes were rivetted upon her face : She gave a gentle scream, and involuntarily fell into the arms of her Alexis.

She could neither conceal her tears of joy nor her emotion, but gave way to the impulse of the moment, and embraced her faithful lover.—They remained in this posture 'till the Touriere came up to them, and said, "I never saw two such loving spirits : Pray have pity upon me, who never willingly did wrong."

Alphonsine raised her head, and while her eyes expressed more love than any words could have done, she said,

"How

“ How came my Alexis here ?”

“ Oh ! repeat those charming words once more,” said the Marquis, clasping her to his anxious bosom ; but Alphonsine gently reproved him, and said, “ what did I say ;—what did you wish me to repeat.”

“ Call me once more your Alexis,” said the Marquis, “ and do not blast all my anxious hopes, now I have been thus fortunate.—I have searched for you every where ; have been at Wielbourg—at your aunt’s—all in vain ; and at last my propitious stars guided me hither in time, I hope, to prevent your taking any rash vows, except you wish me to follow your example, merely to convince you of the sincerity of my love ; for I protest, if you will not agree to quit this gloomy asylum, I will embrace the most rigorous order in France, that of La Trappe ; for life and riches will be a burthen to me without my Alphonsine ; I can raise every difficulty you can foresee.—My uncle is at the

the Castle of Souvigny ; he will do any thing to oblige me ; he has engaged to bring my father over to consent to our union ; therefore allow me to write to our common father, Baron Wielbourg, to come and remove you from this horrid place.—Remember, you once promised Alexis de Wielbourg you would be his—Alphonso de St. Cernin therefore has a right to claim you as his destined bride.”

The Marquis would have spoke, most likely, for half an hour longer, if Alphonfine's heart had not overflowed.—Her lover's trembling anxiety, and the sincerity of his passion, of which she could no longer doubt, again brought tears of joy into her eyes, and her wish to quit the world soon vanished.—She prest her Alphonso's hand, saying,

“ I have no will but your's and my uncle's ;
pray rise.—I know I have acted imprudently,
but I own I thought you had forgot that
Alphonfine

Alphonse you now so tenderly claim ; but
pray rise."

The Marquis did as she desired, blaming
himself very severely for having complied
with the Baron's desires.

" Oh ! all is for the best, I am convinced,
my dear Alphonso," said the lovely girl,
" we might never have known how dear we
were to each other."

They now grew rather more calm.—The
Touriere kept at a distance ; but they had so
many things to say to each other, that one
o'clock drew near, before they thought of se-
parating ; and then the Touriere was obliged
to remind them of the time of night ; so after
a thousand promises on both sides, they re-
luctantly prepared to part.—The Marquis
assured her he would explain every thing to
her in a letter the next day.—The worthy
Touriere and the Sacristain were their
friends ; therefore, for their sakes, he hoped

she

she would not mention having seen him, even to her most intimate friends, if she honoured any of the nuns or novices with that title.

“ Oh ! Sister Anne is my best friend, my dear Alphonso, and she and you may depend upon my discretion.”

“ A thousand thanks for the kind assurance, my Alphonsine ; I will write to the Baron the moment I get home ; for I shall think every hour an age, ’till you have quitted this odious dress—though it is really very becoming ; but you will favour me with three lines in answer to my letter, I hope.”

“ Most certainly : But pray where is your home now, my Alphonso.”

“ I am upon a visit to the Prince de Montalban, my amiable Alphonsine ;” but the clock having struck, the Marquis was obliged

obliged to hasten away, more in love than ever.

Alphonse had a thousand questions to ask Sister Anne, and would have told her how happy she was, had she been allowed time.

"I am sure, my dear sister," said the old woman, "our looks will not betray our want of courage; you do not look much as if you had seen a ghost."

"No, I have seen my guardian angel," said Alphonse, embracing her old friend very affectionately.—"Oh! you do not know how light my heart is."

"Ah! my dear sister," said the Touriere, laughing, "I never saw so sincere a vocation."

At that moment, they heard the nuns advancing, and both fell upon their knees to say

say the last prayer, which was a very short one."

The Abbess, who had a very high opinion of Alphonsine's natural courage and good sense, chose to attend to hear her report, knowing how much depended upon what she said.—She came in first, and immediately addressed her.

" Well, my dear child, I hope this watching will not bring on a return of your cold ; for I am sure you have neither seen nor heard any thing to frighten you."

" Indeed I have not, Madame," said Alphonsine ; so far from having been at all alarmed, I could almost promise to watch every night alone."

This assurance, which was delivered with the utmost sincerity, afforded the Abbess such a triumph over all the rest of the community, that she was quite delighted, and tenderly

tenderly embraced her favourite child, who had thus, in a great measure, re-established the credit of her house.—She reserved the lecture she meant to give the nuns 'till a more convenient opportunity—convinced now that none of them would venture again to talk of being disturbed by phantoms or groans.

As soon as matins were over, Alphonsine retired to her cell, but not before she had answered a great many questions the other novices were eager to ask. She assured them all, in the most positive terms, that she had neither seen nor heard the ghost, and protested she did not believe any of them had.

It must be allowed she had less reason to be alarmed than her poor friend, Victoria, though the reader may perhaps begin to guess this horrid spectre, and the Marquis de St. Cernin, were one and the same person.

The anxiety the Abbess's description of her beautiful foreign novice occasioned him, has already been mentioned, and the determination he formed in consequence, to see this all-accomplished maiden, if possible ; — the discourse he overheard, while he was walking upon the terrace, forming plans how to gratify his wishes, astonished him so much for a few moments, that he forgot his Alphonse, the Abbey de Clugny, and the fair novice ; but the more he reflected upon what he had heard, the less he understood the purport of the Prince's words, or what the Maréchal meant ; he flung himself into bed the moment he returned into his room, and tried to restore some degree of tranquillity to his agitated mind, by courting that repose he really began to want.

At last he forgot himself, but awoke at day-break, and thought it must be very late ; jumped out of bed, and found it was not much past five o'clock :—Convinced he should not sleep any more, he thought it un-

necessary to lay down again ; he therefore dressed, and stepped out of his window, as before ; soon saw the gardener enter, who no longer had his doubts whether he should let him out at the little private door ; for he even very respectfully entreated his Lordship would take the key with him, to let himself in again, when he returned from his walk, as he was going to work quite on the opposite side of the garden.—The Marquis willingly consented to the proposal, adding, if you have got another, my friend, I will keep this, while I stay, by which means I can take a stroll early or late, as it suits me, without deranging any person.

“ It is much at your Lordship’s service,”
was the answer.

The Marquis put a piece of gold into the man’s hand in return for his complaisance, and set out for the convent, meaning to hear mass, thinking he should be able to distinguish Alphonse’s voice from among the rest,

rest, if she really was in the Abbey, and thought the music might well be Heavenly, if they had such singers in their holy choir.

As he was rather sooner than he had been the morning before, the bell had not begun to ring for the mass he meant to hear, so he sauntered about to kill a quarter of an hour, before he went into the church, and soon caught sight of his old friend, the Sacristain's father.—Advancing towards him, he instantly addressed him, it having struck him, during his walk, that this good man's son might facilitate the gratification of the wish he had formed.

He asked him a few questions respecting the rules of the Abbey, mentioned the visit he had paid there over night, the indulgences he had met with, and expatiated upon the fine views he had enjoyed from the leads.—The old man had a vast deal to say upon this subject; so by way of changing the discourse, the Marquis asked him where

he lived ? The old man pointed to a small neat cottage near the church, and the Marquis said, he must take a nearer survey of it, so walked home with him—found something was wanting, and gave him money to have it bought ; then told the old man, that during his visit at the Abbey, he had heard the story of a novice, who was lately arrived there, which had made him so curious to see her, that if, by his means, or his son's, he could only get a glimpse of her face, he would make it very well worth their while.

The old man, having had such proofs already of the Marquis's generosity, listened to him very attentively, and assured him, when he ceased speaking, he should be very happy to oblige him, but gave a few hints that he would not engage in any thing likely to hurt his son.

The Marquis told him, his views were of the most honourable kind, and that he would give either him or his son fifty Louis, merely for

for a sight of the lady unknown to her, whether she was the person he suspected or not.

Such a sum of money, for so trifling a favour, was being bountiful indeed ; the old man thought no harm could arise from what the Marquis wished ; he therefore made no scruple of promising to do all in his power to oblige him, and told him the Touriere was his sister, with whom his son always resided ; so he thought, between them, they might be capable of contriving means to gratify the desire his Lordship had formed.

The Marquis, having thought of all the ways and means, if he did but find the old man inclined to serve him, told him how he thought it might be done very easily, if his sister or his son did but know the night that would be this novice's turn to watch the grave, as the altar in the inner church was exactly facing the middle of the outer one, and the coffin stood between that and the grate, if the Sacristain or the Touriere could

contrive to put the curtain a little on one side, or make a slit in it sufficient for him to get a peep at those who watched, he would come at any time of night that would best suit his son, and when there was not the least chance of his being discovered.

The old man engaged to satisfy his curiosity one way or the other ; but said, he must consult his sister and son first ; therefore he would give his Lordship an answer the next morning, if he came as usual, to hear mass.

The Marquis promised to be there at the same time, and was punctual to his word.—The old man was waiting for him at the style where they had first met, and told him he had learnt one or both of the last novices were to be upon duty that evening. The Marquis was very happy to think he should so soon be out of the suspense he at present laboured under, and asked his old friend if his son or sister were inclined to favour

favour him with a sight of them, as he had proposed.

His son was a very clever lad, he said, and would do any thing to oblige his Lordship; he had mentioned the curtain to him; but the youth thought they might observe a slit, or its being drawn up sufficiently to get a sight of them, and he had a much surer method of satisfying his Lordship.

The Marquis said, he would leave every thing to their prudence, and would be at the Abbey by eleven o'clock that evening. The old man shewed him the way into the Touriere's lodge, where she and her nephew resided, and they parted each perfectly satisfied with the other. The family at Souvigny generally supped at nine, and commonly retired before eleven; and, as the Marquis was now known to be a very early riser, they were not astonished at his being the first to take his leave for the night.—His servant was accustomed to be dismissed almost im-
H 3 mediately,

mediately, and very seldom assisted his master to undress ; so as soon as he was alone, the Marquis, not wishing to be known, should any one chance to meet him, wrapt himself in his regimental cloak, which was white, and reached down to his shoes, stept out of his window, as usual.

The key he had obtained from the gardener was now very useful ; he let himself out, and having locked the door after him, proceeded to the Abbey—found the Sacristain waiting for him, who said, the moment he was near enough,

“ I am sure, if any of the country people have seen or met your Lordship, they will swear to-morrow they saw the late Abbe's returning home ; for you look just like the figure they have all so often fancied they have seen.”

The Marquis laughed very heartily at the lad's notion, which he thought very likely,
and

and then asked him if he was sure the two last novices were upon duty.

The lad said, he knew one of them was, but they did not watch together, as had been intended—one of them was indisposed ; however, he would be bound to shew his Lordship the whole nine, if he did not think it too much trouble to come to the convent so often ; for he had got the key of a small door that led into the inner church, which he could open very softly, by which means his Lordship would have an excellent view of them.

" But won't they be alarmed," said the Marquis ; " they will certainly hear our footsteps.—Besides, they will see the door open."

" Oh ! we will go very quietly, my Lord ; and as the door opens outwards, we shall not have any light, it is a chance whether they observe it.—At all events, they

will only suppose it is the ghost, which they have all heard or seen, more than once."

The Marquis smiled, but said he should be very sorry to frighten them.

"Why, then, if your Lordship will allow me to dress you up in your cloak ; I will make you look just like their Father Confessor ; then they will only suppose it is him peeping, to see if they are upon duty ; and if they should ask him in the morning if he did not come at such an hour, and he should, as he most probably will, deny it, why they will only prognosticate his death from what they saw."

The Marquis was highly diverted at this last proposal, and gave the lad great credit for the thought ; so allowed himself to be made a monk of, and would most likely have enjoyed the grotesque figure he cut, could he have seen himself when the boy had completed his toilette. As to the cloak not coming

ing down to his feet, when it was put over his head, and arranged round his neck by the means of his pocket handkerchief, it did not signify, as the lad observed, because the door was so low, that he would be obliged to stoop, and had to ascend two steps to get into the inner church, but he need not advance, and then they would not see his legs. They now advanced as gently as possible up the outer church towards the door in question, which the lad opened as softly as its creaking hinges would permit him to do.

The Marquis only ascended the first step. The effect his appearance had upon the terrified novices, has been already related. The Marquis was prepared to represent a monk; and had taken this precaution purposely not to frighten them, but could not help laughing when he found they actually took him for a ghost; and as Alphonsine was not of the party, he could not withstand the temptation of confirming their suspicions, by overturning the lights, deranging the pall, &c.

for, had he addressed them, his voice would have convinced them he was not their holy father, and he must have discovered himself to have calmed their fears, which he could not have done with any prudence, situated as he was ; for what excuse could he allege for having thus broken through the rules of their sacred order.

The Sacristain was highly diverted when they left the church, to think what fine stories the appearance of this ghost would occasion. The Marquis now returned home, after promising the lad he would be there again the next evening.—What past in the course of that day, has already been related, and the resolution Father Onuphrious had formed of watching the grave of this turbulent spirit in the evening.

The Marquis knew he had no chance of seeing the other new novice that night ; but finding himself very much inclined to frighten the old superstitious fellow, he went to the Sacristain's

Sacristain's lodge, as he had promised, and imparted his intentions to the lad and his aunt, who both enjoyed the idea excessively, having neither of them any opinion of Father Onuphrious's great sanctity, who was not their Confessor.—Sister Anne's conscience, like her nephew's, was under the direction of the curate of Avalon, who had always been a great friend to their family, and as she was allowed free egress and regress, she was at liberty to choose her own spiritual director.

Paul, the Sacristain's name, now told the Marquis of the two holy brethren whom Father Onuphrius had sent for, to bear him company during the penance he had imposed upon himself, though he wished to keep this a profound secret, and meant to assume all the merit of having watched alone.

This was too bad, the Marquis thought, after what he had said at the Castle, and no fright he could occasion them would be an adequate punishment for their hypocritical

duplicity.—He was wrapt in his cloak, as he had been the night before, and this time had brought the morning cap, which is worn by the officers in garrison or in camp, instead of a hat.

Paul, as has been observed, was delighted with the idea of frightening the three monks, but said, he was afraid, if his Lordship made his appearance by the same door he had done the night before, the monks would hear him advancing up the outer church, and then he should be suspected of being privy to the plot, and they might want to discover who the ghost was; he therefore thought they had better, if his Lordship had no objection, get out of the window of his room into the burying ground; he had got the key of the door which led out of that into the inner cloisters, and the Marquis might make his appearance by the door the nuns always entered the church by.

That

That would certainly be the best way, the Marquis said, and asked the lad if it was possible to see the holy fathers from any of the windows of the church which looked into the court of the monastery.

"Not very well," Paul said; "but they would try, if his Lordship pleased;" so they both went to the side of the church, and the Marquis mounted upon one of the buttress's, which jutted out from the wall, and saw how devoutly they were employed. They made such a noise, singing, and roaring, that it was easy enough to hear them, notwithstanding the thickness of the walls.

"Oh! they are at their prayers, I find," said Paul.—"One of the Franciscans was singing the following air:

"Les Esprits dont on nous fait Peur
"Sont les meillivres gens du monde
"Voyez ici quelle Bonne chere
"Quel bon vin comme tout abonde."

"I

"I think, if the late Abbess can rest in her grave now, nothing will ever disturb her."

"Why, truly, I am of your opinion, Paul" said the Marquis, jumping down; "but come, let us go and prepare for the visit I mean to make this jovial party."

They now returned to the lodge, and with a piece of charcoal, the Marquis drew a death's head and cross bones in the front of his white cap.—Sister Anne did not think the cloak would answer his Lordship's purpose now so well as a large sheet, and soon produced a very white one. The Marquis consented to her proposal, and desired her to dress him properly for the good lady he meant to represent.—He first opened the seams of the cap at the sides, made two holes for the eyes, and the same for the nose and mouth, then pulled it over his face.—The old woman now put him on one of her black *guimpes* or veils, which came down in a peak upon his forehead, and under his chin,

chin, and then fastened the sheet to this and his shoulders, and protested at last, she was half frightened herself at the horrible figure she had made of his Lordship, who, being thus adorned, got out of the window into the burying-ground, where both him and the lad took off their shoes, that they might not be heard walking along the cloisters.—The door that led into them was opened very gently, and they approached the one that led into the church.—They tried it very softly, and found it was fastened within side; so the Sacristain said, they must e'en go round; he would run any risk, rather than not spoil their mirth.

“ Then, to prevent their making their escape by this door in their fright,” said the Marquis, “ let us fasten it on the outside.—Besides, should they get round by the great door into the outward court, they would cut off our retreat, and expose us to a discovery.”

“ That

" That was very certain," the Sacristain said; " but how could they effect this."

" Have you got a cord and a long stick or pole," said the Marquis.

" Plenty of both in the burying ground, my Lord," was the answer.

The Marquis went with him to choose what he thought would suit his purpose.—The door that led into the church stood within a very thick wall; he therefore, with the utmost precaution, fastened a very strong cord to a stout round iron ring, which lifted up the latch when turned—put a long thick pole across the door way, which rested upon the sides of the wall, and tied the cord very fast to the middle; this supported it, and made it impossible to get the door open within side.—They now returned as they came, through the burying ground; got in again at the window—told Sister Anne what they had been doing—and then entered the great

great church, both still barefooted, though the Godly souls were making too much noise themselves to have heard their steps, had they advanced with less caution.

In passing one of the pillars, near which the solitary lamp that illuminated the great church hung, the Marquis saw a *chair standing, the back of which formed a sort of ladder ; it struck him this might be of use to him ; he therefore took it under his shroud ; they stopt to listen when they reached the arched door, wishing the friars to be making a noise, during which the Sacristain might put the key into the lock unperceived. The opportunity soon offered, as the same Franciscan the Marquis had heard singing before, soon began the following song, and the two others joined in the chorus :

“ Celui qui séniviera nira pas à Matines.

“ Celui qui ne Boira pas aura la discipline :

“ Buvons, Buvons, Buvons, doni mes Frères.”

* In all French churches, chairs are the only seats in use, which are paid for by those who require such an indulgence.

Had

Had the Marquis had any doubt about putting his scheme into execution, this would have raised all his scruples ; he therefore gave the signal that had been agreed upon by him and the Sacristain, for him to fling the door open with the greatest violence.—The Marquis entered upon his knees, and rose by degrees ; for having ascended the two steps within the door, he placed his back against the wall, and was able to mount his ladder ; therefore, in three seconds, he had grown two feet ; and the friars, as has been already related, thinking no doubt he would soon be as high as the church, began to decamp.

The Marquis, finding how well he had succeeded, ventured to descend from his elevation, which the friars were too frightened to perceive, and pursued them with hasty strides and angry gestures.—The moment they all turned their back upon him, he overturned every thing—extinguished the two lamps, &c. and then throwing his ladder, with all his might, into the outer church,
which,

which, having a very fine echo, the sound of its falling seemed like thunder to the already terrified friars, and jumping down the two steps his Lordship banged to the door after him with all his strength, and double locked it as they found it: He had brought away the friar's key with him, being determined to keep them for a little in the dark, and to afford the Sacristain and him time to make their retreat unperceived.—They returned the same way they had entered, replaced the chair where they found it, and hastened back to the lodge, expecting the bell would soon summon Paul to the friars assistance.

The old Touriere was highly diverted with her nephew's account of the scene, and what was going forward, when the unlucky ghost broke in upon them.—She helped the Marquis to undress again, and had but just finished to disencumber him of his shroud and mask, when the bell rung. The lad did not answer the first summons, but adorned in his surplice, so as to appear before the nuns—
and

and at last he went to the grate. What passed between him and the friars has already been related; and when they sent him to fetch his key of the arched door, he told the Marquis all that had passed, who said, he would get into the cloisters again through the burying ground, and assist him to unfasten the other door. As soon as he returned from carrying his key to the grate, he was sent round by Father Onuphrious, as has been mentioned, to watch that none of the nuns came upon them unawares, and to open the door that led into the cloisters, if he could; so, instead of going round by the great doors, as the friar had desired him, the Marquis and him got once more into the burying ground, and the former unfastened the door in five seconds, and retreated with the pole and cord—locked the door they had come in at after him, and got into the lodge again by the window. He had given the Sacristain the key he had brought away with him, which the friars had been hunting for in vain, and told him to lay it upon the coffin again, near the foot of it, if he

he found an opportunity.—The lad did so very dexterously, while Father Onuphrious was letting the Franciscans out; and this increased the poor monk's terror when he discovered it, as he firmly believed an invisible agent, belonging to the infernal powers, had brought it back again. The Marquis stopt in the lodge 'till the father dismissed Paul, after having made him promise secrecy. His Lordship was excessively amused with Father Peter's second fright, and the alarm finding the key had occasioned Father Onuphrious. He now returned home, having told the Sacristain to meet him between eight and nine the next evening, in the wood adjoining the gardens of the Castle, as he would probably know by that time who was watching the grave.

C H A P. VI.

FOR the first time since his arrival at Souvigny, the Marquis laid in bed 'till eight o'clock.—The Prince had company to dinner; but at the appointed time, the Marquis repaired to the wood, and found his old friend instead of the Sacristain. The old man told him, his son would certainly have been there, but the Abbess was upon duty herself, with the Procratress; he was therefore afraid of being out of the way, in case he should be wanted

wanted.—The Marquis said, the lad had acted very right; he had given the old man the sum he had promised him, which was all to be laid by for Paul, whom the Marquis had now taken quite under his protection.—As his Lordship felt no inclination to alarm a relation of his kind host's, nor indeed any more of the holy tribe, he told the old fellow to see his sister and son in the course of the morning, and to learn who watched the next night; he would call upon him in the afternoon, and would take his measures according to his report.—As he was still all anxiety to see this other novice, whom the Touriere had assured him was very handsome, though she could not satisfy his curiosity concerning her history and her name, he was punctual to his appointment, and had learnt the young lady was to watch that very evening, and with Sister Anne; nothing could be more fortunate, he thought:—But as he wished to consult both her and her nephew, as to which would be the most likely means of seeing this young lady, without either alarming her,

if

if it possibly could be avoided, or being discovered himself, he proceeded to the Abbey, walked into Sister Anne's apartment, and told her, as he was very unwilling to frighten this handsome novice, whether she was the lady he hoped to see or not, he desired she and Paul would devise some method of gratifying his curiosity, without having recourse to the arched door, which was now become such an object of terror to the sisterhood.—The old Touriere, who, interest apart, had taken a great liking to the Marquis, reflected for a few minutes, and then said,

“ I have hit upon an excellent plan, my Lord.—I will place the novice at the head of the coffin—that will be exactly opposite the grate—so do you, my Lord, come to the lodge as early as you can; I suppose that will not be much before eleven, and then Paul can conduct you into the outer church in the dark; let him knock at the grate; I will come to it, and draw the curtain up; he may say he wanted his key, or any thing; by this

means, your Lordship will have a very good view of the novice, and she will not be able to see you, as you will be in the dark."

" I give you great credit for your bright thought, my dear sister," said the Marquis ; " but if it should be the lady I so much wish to see, your nephew shall want to come in, and you shall admit me in his stead."

This the Touriere ventured to remonstrate against.—" Suppose the young lady was sincere in her vocation, it would be the ruin of her to let him into the church ; for the novice would no doubt inform the Abbess and Confessor of what she had done, and his Lordship must know what would be the consequence."

However, the Marquis was so afraid Alphonse, if it was her, at last might refuse to see him at any other time, that he was determined not to lose this favourable opportunity ; he therefore made use of such *irresistible*

arguments, that Sister Anne promised to oblige him ; he returned to the Castle vastly happy to think he had succeeded so far, tho' his anxiety was greater than ever.

The moment he was at liberty, he flew to the convent, and found the Sacristain solus in the lodge, who assured him this time he would not be disappointed ; the beautiful novice was upon duty with his aunt—so away they both went into the church, approached the grate with the utmost precautions, and heard Sister Anne's voice.—The Marquis, whose heart beat violently as the moment approached, bid the Sacristain rap at the grate :—He hardly dare give way to hope, therefore his agitation was excessive, 'till the curtain drew up ; but the moment it did, a single glance was enough to convince him the much-admired lovely novice was his Alphonsine.

If this charming lady had not been very much alarmed just then, she must have discovered

covered there were more voices than one, for it was the Marquis, who was now all impatience, that called out, contrary to the agreement he had made with the Touriere, to open the door; and instead of advancing very gently, when he was let in, he acted as has been already related.

No two hours of his life ever past like the following ones; he hurried out of the church while the clock was striking one, and knowing he could not see Sister Anne 'till after matins, he set out upon his return home.—A thousand pleasing ideas crowded upon his mind during his walk.—The very resolution Alphonsine had taken, was a proof of her love.—He then reflected upon the promise his uncle had made him, and was in hopes he would not insist upon his deferring his nuptials for a twelvemonth.—He went to bed as soon as he reached his apartment, but found over joy was as great an enemy to sleep as anxiety; and he was so full of the promise he had made his Alphonsine, that he

rose at six, and began to throw all his adventures, since they parted, upon paper ; particularly elucidated the ghost affair, how and why he had frightened the holy fathers, &c.

He had hardly finished, before he was summoned to breakfast.—He was in such excellent spirits to what he had ever been since his arrival at Souvigny, that the Prince and Princess remarked it with the greatest pleasure ; and the Marechal said,

“ Why, you seem to have had some agreeable dreams last night, Alphonso ; did they remind you of Wielbourg.”

“ My last night’s adventures did very strongly, my dear uncle ; but I do not put more faith in dreams than I do in ghosts :—I cannot tell all my secrets publicly ; but if you will favour me with half an hour’s private audience after breakfast, I will surprise you with a discovery I have made very lately,

ly, and will allow you to make whatever use you chuse of my communication."

The amiable Marechal was delighted with such a proof of his nephew's confidence, and assured him, he felt himself highly flattered, and that he might depend upon his best services, as well as his secrecy, if required.

The Prince was very gay during their meal, and said, "he foresaw something had arisen from his Lordship's rambles."

The Marquis laughed, and assured his kind host he had not left his room that morning.

The Marechal, who was all anxiety to learn what had made his dear nephew so happy, as soon as breakfast was over, entreated the Prince and Princess would excuse them both for a little while, and they adjourned to the terrace, which ran parallel with the windows.

The Marquis now related all that had past since his arival at Souvigny to his uncle, which the reader is already acquainted with ; but when he was describing the monk's fright, the Marechal was obliged to hasten to one of the seats to have his laugh out.

When the Marquis had concluded, he assured him, in the kindest terms, he would take every thing upon himself, and gave him his word of honour that he should marry the woman of his choice, whether the Duke de Longueville consented with a good or bad grace—for he was certain he could use arguments that would force him, in a manner, to agree to the proposal ; but before he applied to him, which he meant to do in person, as he could talk upon the subject better than he could write, he thought it would be proper to set the worthy Baron Wielbourg's heart at ease, by informing him where his beloved niece was : He would therefore begin a correspondence with him upon this agreeable occasion, and would to-

licit

licit his consent to their union, and the moment he received his answer, he would set out for Paris, and the Marquis might depend upon his succeeding with the Duke de Longueville.

These solemn assurances added to the Marquis's happiness.—He expressed his gratitude to his kind uncle in the strongest terms; adding, he would seize the same opportunity to write to his generous benefactor, but would shew his uncle the letter, as he was determined in future not to take a single step of importance, without first consulting him, and then merely to persevere in his intentions, if they met his approbation.

" You do not know how much you oblige me, by these repeated marks of your confidence," my dear Alphonso," said the Maréchal :—" But will you approve of my letting the Prince and Princess into our secret; they will rejoice with us, and will be very much flattered, I know.—Besides, you have

raised their curiosity, and it is in their power to serve us very essentially ; the sooner Mademoiselle de Cheylus assumes her own name, and leaves off her monastic dress, the better."

" I am quite of your way of thinking in that respect, my dear uncle," said the Marquis ; " for I cannot bear the idea of her even wearing the garb of a nun ; so pray tell the Prince and Princess whatever you chuse, even to the trick I played the monks, if you think they will not be offended with me."

" Not they, I promise you, Alphonso ;—“ but I will now run all risks ;” leaving the Marquis for that purpose—as he said he had rather not be present during his recital—so he would go into his own room and write to the Baron, while his uncle recapitulated his freaks to their amiable hosts.—However, he had not concluded his epistle before they all three came in search of him.

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The Prince and Princess both congratulated him very sincerely, and hoped this fortunate discovery would make him fonder than ever of Souvigny.—The Prince added, he longed to hear Father Onuphrious's own account of this wicked ghost, that had so terribly alarmed him and his brethren, promising the Marquis he would not undeceive him as to its being a real one, and positively thought he had hardly been sufficiently punished, all things considered.—However, he hoped this fright would have a salutary effect upon both him and his companions.—At all events, he would be bound they would never chuse a church again for the scene of their midnight revels.

The Princess said, “ she thought Mademoiselle de Cheylus had better remain under the Abbess's protection, 'till they received an answer from Baron Wielbourg, though not in the character of a novice, as all her reasons for adopting a monastic life had ceased : Adding, she doubtless little thought an even-

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ing, she most likely looked forward to with fear and trembling, would terminate so happily.

The Marechal, perceiving how his nephew had been employed, said, “ he would go and write immediately, and they would send their letters off express.

The Prince and Princess entreated them both to invite the worthy Baron to Souvigny in their names, while the Marechal was busy at his pen.—The Marquis stepped to the convent with his packet, which he left with the Touriere, to deliver to his Alphonsine the first opportunity.—He had added a short note, in which he mentioned what had passed since they parted, and concluded by entreating she would favour him with as voluminous an answer as speedily as possible.

When his Lordship returned, he found he had been missed.—The Princess saw him crossing

crossing the pleasure grounds to his window, and beckoned him to her.—Then said,

“ I shall be seriously offended with your Alphonsine, my young friend, if she thus deprives us of your company by day, and breaks your rest every night, as she has done, since your arrival here.—The Marechal has been waiting for your letter to dispatch his.”

The Marquis thanked the Princess for the kind interest she took in his health, and said, his letter would be ready in five minutes;—and before twelve, the express was on its road to Wielbourg.

Soon after dinner, the Princess said, “ she was going to set out upon the most agreeable commission she ever undertook, as she was excessively anxious to see the charming Alphonsine, and to inform the Abbess, notwithstanding her great discretion, that lovely victim’s guardian angel had discovered her retreat, and had sent her, to prevent her from

increasing the holy sisterhood ; because it would be a thousand pities such talents, virtue, and beauty, should be buried in a cloister : But you must favour me with a few lines, Marquis, by way of introduction to the fair novice, as I really wish to make myself an interest in her heart.”

The Marquis instantly wrote a short note, in which he expatiated very feelingly upon the Princess’s innate goodness, and kind intentions towards them.—As soon as he had concluded, he presented his epistle to his amiable hostess, saying,

“ May I hope, Princess, you will add to all the other favours you have already conferred upon me, that of requesting an answer to these few lines :—A letter from my Alphonse will be of double value in my eyes, coming through your hands.”

“ Then I will do my utmost endeavours,” said the Princess, laughing, “ to deserve this kind

kind compliment, my young friend ; but believe me, I trust much more to my credentials, than to my eloquence."

She now set off ;—and as the afternoon was very warm, the Prince and Marechal adjourned to chess in the pavilion, and the Marquis strolled about the adjacent woods, but took care to be at the great door, to hand the Princess out of the carriage.—When she returned, she had been absent about three hours :—Her looks convinced him, the moment he saw her, that she had succeeded to her wishes ; and as soon as they were in the saloon, she gave him a note from Alphonse.—The other gentlemen joined them, while the Marquis was reading it.—The Princess looked very archly at him, when he turned from the window, having finished his epistle, and said, perhaps my young friend was never favoured with a letter from a cloister before."

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"I really never was, Princess ;" therefore I shall have many reasons to be very choice of this."

"Pray is it signed," said the Princess, with a smile.

The Marquis looked rather surprised, perceiving the Princess had some meaning, but answered in the affirmative.

"And pray in what name," said the Princess, in the same gay tone.

The Marquis shewed her the bottom of the note, saying, "the one most dear to me, and almost the first word I ever uttered, I have heard the good Baron say."

"I no longer wonder at your love, my young friend," said the Princess; "it was a sentiment that grew up with you, and no doubt acquired strength every day; it would be cruel, indeed, to oppose such an union;—
but

but by resuming the name of Alphonsine, the lovely lady has relinquished one that was far dearer to her, I am convinced ; and as she has not yet quitted her novice's habit, it would not have been yet out of character, had she signed herself Sister St. Alexis."

The Marquis looked surprised, and excessively pleased, saying, "is it possible."

"It is the name the handsome novice has borne, ever since she has been at the Abbey of Clugny," said the Princess."

The Prince and Marechal laughed, and the Marquis was very much delighted with this fresh proof of his Alphonsine's love.

The surprise the Princess's visit had occasioned at the Abbey, amused them the whole evening.—She assured them she had merely told her cousin, if there ever was any of those noises or appearances the nuns and novices had been so much troubled with, they ought only

only to attribute them to warnings, meant to prevent Mademoiselle de Cheylus from forming any rash vows ; and, as I find, she went on, Father Onuphrious has prudently chose to keep the adventures that befel him and his companions, on the night they watched, a profound secret, I hope the novices fears will subside by degrees, or that they will prevent them from embracing a monastic life ; and in the latter case, your Lordship's appearance may have been of real service to them.

About eleven, they all retired as usual ;—and though the Marquis had received a note from his Alphonsine over night, he determined to go to the half past six o'clock mass, in hopes he should find an answer to his large packet at the Touriere's.—He was not mistaken in his conjectures ; one had been given her just before.

This epistle was very long, and contained a series of her adventures since they parted so abruptly

abruptly at Wielbourg ; and the Marquis was so impatient to peruse it, that his fit of devotion went off, and he sauntered home-wards.—He was highly amused with the conclusion, as Alphonsine gave him a summary account of the various stories in circulation concerning the ghost ; adding, there had been a general assembly held that morning, in consequence of the favourable report she had given (she had wrote during the night), by the holy father's order, who had laboured very hard to convince them all, by the most prolix far fetched arguments, that there could be no such things as ghosts, tho' he had frequently turned pale, and often looked behind him during his lecture, and had concluded by saying, he should have the confessionals removed out of the inner church into one of the low apartments of the convent, where they would not have their minds disturbed by such ridiculous nonsense, while at so sacred a duty.—The Marquis laughed aloud at this clever arrangement of the old hypocrite, who, he was convinced,

was

was in reality afraid of entering that church alone ; and as the appearance of the ghost would never be elucidated to his satisfaction, he would most probably always believe in evil spirits.

As the Marquis had now no secrets for his three ancient friends, he read them this part of his letter during breakfast, and the Prince and Princess acknowledged Father Onuphrious had fallen very much in their esteem, not so much through his pusillanimity, as from the pious manner in which he was watching the late Abbess's grave on the night his courage was put to the trial.

" Between eleven and twelve," the Princess said " she was going to Avalon, but should return home to dinner."

The Marechal and Marquis both offered to attend her, but she declined the favour, and the Prince proposed a game at billiards.

They

They amused themselves thus, 'till it was time to dress for dinner.

But what was the Marquis's surprise, upon entering the drawing-room, when he came from his toilette, to perceive Alphonsine, no longer dressed like a nun, seated near the Princess.—He instantly guessed to whose kindness he owed this favour, and flew forward to welcome her to Souvigny, and then introduced her to the Marechal, who told him he had not waited for his coming in to welcome the niece of Baron Wielbourg to the Castle; he had been in the secret, and received the charming lady when she arrived. She had plenty of elegant cloaths at the convent, which had been made for the visit she was going to pay, when her devotion brought her on thither; and the Princess having told her of her intentions over night, it is to be supposed she had taken some pains to appear to advantage in her lover's eyes.

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As soon as dinner was over, the Princess desired the Marquis would shew Mademoiselle de Cheylus the gardens of Souvigny ; it took him up so much time, to point out their various beauties to her, that the Marechal was obliged to go in search of them, to inform them the carriage was in waiting, to take Mademoiselle de Cheylus back to the Abbey.—The Princess smiled when she asked the Marquis if he would do them the favour to escort them to the convent, that she might enjoy his company during her ride back.

The Marquis assured both her and the Prince, he only wished it was in his power to convince them how much he felt the obligations they had laid him under.

The Abbess received them in her parlour ; told the Marquis she was very angry with him, for having thus robbed her of her favourite child, though she was very happy Sister St. Alexis had discovered, before it
was

was too late, that her vocation was not absolutely sincere.—She then gave the Marquis leave to visit his Alphonse once a day, with the grate between them, and the two lovers separated as it grew late, and the Princess rose to take her leave.—During their ride home, she bestowed some very just praises upon Mademoiselle de Cheylus, and the Marquis tried to express the gratitude the Princess's behaviour had inspired him with.

CHAP.

C H A P. VI.

IT has been already mentioned, that the family at Souvigny usually supped at nine.—They had just rose from table on the evening of this day, which the Marquis looked upon as one of the happiest in his whole life, and had seated themselves near one of the windows, to enjoy the benefit of a fine breeze, arising from the Soane.—The night was remarkably fine, and the Marquis thought all nature seemed in harmony with his

his feelings.—He leant over the balcony, looked into the front court, wishing to take a full view of the fine azure sky, the south of France and Italy are so renowned for.— While he was looking round him, he fancied he heard the rattle of a carriage at a distance, and communicated his thoughts to the rest of the party, saying, “ the sound seemed to proceed from the stable yard.”

“ Oh ! I suppose it is the servants moving the coach that has been out,” said the Prince; “ we certainly shall not have any visitors at such a time of night.”

But in less than three minutes, the Chevalier des Marets was announced.

“ Shew him in instantly,” said the Prince, “ I am very happy to find I was mistaken, though the Chevalier is the last person I should have expected at such an hour ; but I shall now have an opportunity, my young friend, of introducing you to one of the best men

men in the world, a second Baron Wielbourg.—The Marechal is already acquainted with him; he resided in my house for many years, and I wish he had never left us; he was preceptor to all our children.—The last words faltered upon his tongue, and an involuntary sigh escaped him; but trying to stifle the emotion the painful recollection had occasioned, he thus went on :

“ He must have set out very late, or have met with some accident upon the road; for his house is only nine leagues from hence.”

The Prince had hardly done speaking, before a gentleman about sixty entered the room.—His countenance convinced the Marquis he might, with propriety, be compared to his worthy protector.—He advanced very slowly, and seemed rather embarrassed, the Marquis thought, which he attributed to his fears—his visit was rather unseasonable. The Prince rose to meet him, and took him

by

by the hand.—Having welcomed him to Souvigny in the kindest manner, he said,

“ My dear friend, how came you to make it thus late, and why don’t we see you oftener; you have not been near us this six weeks.”

“ I have really a great many apologies to make, my noble patron,” said the Chevalier; “ but you know this is my busy time of the year, and I am fond of looking after my vines.”

“ Have you suppt, Chevalier,” said the Princess; “ for you have certainly stopped some where upon the road.”

“ No, really, Princess; I came hither directly from home, but I cannot say I thought of undertaking this journey in the morning, and I only hope the reasons I can allege for intruding upon you at such a time of night, will prove a sufficient excuse for the liberty I have taken; I cannot say I have supped;—

but I do not feel myself at all inclined to eat at present."

"Over fatigued yourself, I dare say," said the Princess; "so pray let us hear what has brought you; but I do not think you have remarked one of your old acquaintances, and my best friends; I need not introduce you to him, though you have not seen the Marechal de Mercoeur for some years; but you are not acquainted with his nephew; so allow me to introduce you to the Marquis de St. Cernin."

The Chevalier all but started; and his emotion, which was before hardly discernible, now became very visible.—He looked very anxiously at the Marquis, and his countenance varied every moment, while he bowed, and said,

"This is an honour I little expected.—I am very happy to see your Lordship."

The

The Chevalier's looks and words seemed to occasion a general surprise, and the Prince said,

"Why, where did you ever see the Marquis before, Chevalier; you have not been to Paris of late years, nor do I recollect your ever having been in Flanders."

"I am afraid I express myself very strangely to night, Monseigneur," said the Chevalier, "but I hope both you and the Marquis will excuse me; my haste to get here in time has confused my weak brain.—I only heard of his Lordship very lately."

"Well, then, now you see him," said the Prince; "and when you have seen and know as much of him as I do, you will be as much attached to him; so pray sit down 'till supper is put upon table."

"I beg I may not have any thing set out," said the Chevalier; "I have a vast deal to say before I sup."

"Then do pray tell us what brought you," said the Prince; for I never saw you confused before.—What has occurred, can I be of any use to you; you know you may command my best services; so pray let me know if you stand in need of any thing I can do for you?"

"You are all goodness and condescension, my generous patron," said the Chevalier;— "but really my confusion does not arise from any thing that has happened to myself—I have just learnt some wonderful news, which I came on purpose to communicate to you and the Princess."

"Nay, now you begin to talk mysteriously," said the Prince:—"Have you heard any thing which concerns me?"

The Chevalier was silent, and looked once more very anxiously at the Marquis, who rose to leave the room, as did the Marechal. The Prince and Princess seemed very much

at a loss, and hardly knew whether to allow their two friends to leave them, or to entreat them to remain where they were, 'till the Chevalier spoke, and said,

" Pray, Gentlemen, keep your seats; I have nothing to say to the Prince and Princess that requires privacy."

" And we can have no secrets from our best friends," said the Prince; " so pray resume your place, Marechal; and I entreat the Marquis would follow your example;—so now for your news, Chevalier; I am prepared for something extraordinary."

" You won't be disappointed, then, Monsieur," said the Chevalier; " but with your leave, I will drink a glass of your Sillery Champaign before I begin, though I never was less in need of a cordial."

" By all means, my good friend," said the Prince; " and we will all keep you com-

pany ; but you ought to drink two glasses to our one."

While the Marquis was filling the glasses, the Princess said, "you have raised my curiosity strangely, Chevalier—so do drink ;—for any thing is preferable to suspense, in my opinion ; we have, or ought to have, been pretty well accustomed to bear misfortunes, therefore are not easily alarmed."

"I am thoroughly acquainted with your fortitude, Princess," said the Chevalier. "I have seen you bear affliction with becoming resignation, and have no doubt but both you and the Prince will support unexpected felicity with the same equanimity."

The Chevalier now drank his wine ; but the Prince, whose curiosity was raised to the greatest pitch by all these preparations, and the Chevalier's evident wish to delay time, said hastily,

"Relieve

"Relieve my anxiety, Chevalier—there is but one thing could—but I dare not—cannot—won't hope."

"My noble benefactor said he would honour me so far as to drink a glass of wine with me," said the Chevalier, interrupting him; but his glass still remains full."

"This is absolutely torturing one," said the Prince, instantly swallowing his wine.—
"Now, my good friend, what have you to say: I find I have hardly any command over myself; a ray of hope darted across me."

The Prince paused, and fixed his anxious eyes upon the Chevalier, who said,

"I hope the most sanguine wish my noble friend can form will soon be gratified."

The Prince started from his chair, and flung his arms round the Chevalier's neck, saying, "my son lives."—He then ran from one

to the other, almost breathless, and wild with joy, but was not able to utter another word, 'till he had flung himself into his chair, and given way to a flood of tears, which eased his almost bursting heart.—The Princess, not less overjoyed, and equally agitated, wept in silence.—As soon as the Prince could speak, he exclaimed,

“ Oh ! my Louisa, shall we be thus blest before we die.—Oh ! 'tis too much ; the expectation is almost more than I can bear ;—but you do not speak, Chevalier ; only say our son lives, and we shall be for ever bound to pray for you.”

“ If the Chevalier d'Oley does live, my best of friends, I can have no merit in his being thus restored to you.”

“ I cannot bear that, if,” said the Prince, seizing the Chevalier once more by the hand.

“ Then

"Then we will blot it out of our vocabulary," said the Chevalier; "but for Heaven's sake, calm your transports; they make me dread to confirm the joyful tidings."

The Prince and Princess both embraced the worthy man once more.

"Oh! what have all our past sorrows been," said the Prince, "to these few happy moments, the tears trickling down his cheeks while he spoke, and his countenance all animation.—Oh! my friends—my dear Marechal, can you conceive my transports; I shall once more embrace the darling of my heart, for such was my long-lost Lewis.—I have sometimes thought I was punished, perhaps justly, for preferring him to his brothers;—but I hope the Almighty has forgiven what was at most an involuntary error; for I am certain I shall adore him now."

The Marechal, whose joy, as well as his nephew's, overflowed at their eyes, to see this ancient couple thus restored to that felicity which had so long been a stranger to their bosoms, now tried to express their feelings.

Their transports, however, received a momentary check ; for the Princess, who had bore the happy tidings with much more apparent composure than her husband, sat down in her chair, and fainted away, and must have fallen to the ground, if the Marquis had not perceived her going, and caught her in his arms.—He was frightened, and called for assistance.—The Prince and the Marechal were so anxious to know more, that they were pressing the Chevalier to satisfy their curiosity ; but they now approached the Princess, and this little damp his joy received rather calmed the Prince.—The Princess soon recovered, and said, she could almost fancy she had awoke from a most pleasing dream ; she saw who supported her, and

and the anxiety the Marquis displayed ; she therefore flung her arms round him, saying,

“ My amiable young friend, I see your heart beats in unison with mine.—I have now got a son to embrace ; for I certainly did not misunderstand you, Chevalier ; you gave me reason to suppose my Lewis lived.”

“ I never flatter with false hopes, Princess,” said the Chevalier ; your son certainly lives, and is as anxious as you can be, to embrace his indulgent parents.”

“ My happiness is compleat in this world,” said the Prince ; “ I could resign my life with pleasure the moment after I have embraced my son.—Nay, I should have died happy, had I only been told in my last moments he lived ; but I will now drink another glass of wine with my dear friends ; it will do us all good, before I ask any more questions.”

The Marechal readily agreed, and filling his glass, said, “ here’s health and long life to the Duke de Nemours.—I know no one in company that will refuse to pledge me.”

The Marquis instantly repeated the words ; adding, I do not think poor Father Onuphrious ever swallowed a bumper tumbler with more pleasure than I shall drink this agreeable toast.”

The Prince, who was looking at him, said, with stifled emotion, “ Oh ! Marechal, why won’t you permit me to give way to my feelings ; surely ——.”

“ My dear friend,” said the Marechal with a smile, “ your joy overcomes you—I beg we may only look forward.”

The Chevalier also smiled, and said, “ that was much the best with such delightful prospects in view ; for he was convinced the Prince

Prince had even more happiness than he was aware of, yet in store for him."

" Well, the Lord be praised for all things," said the Prince; " it is not fit every wish we frail mortals form should be gratified; for our desires would become unbounded, and I have less than any one a right to repine at such a happy moment; but pray, my dear friend, when shall I be blessed with the sight of my son; is he near."

" I left his Grace at some distance, Monseigneur," said the Chevalier; but if you will permit me, I will go in search of him immediately."

" I will go with you," said the Prince, jumping up.

" I must beg leave to object to your proposal, Monseigneur," said the Chevalier;— " my carriage is in waiting, and it won't hold more than two; and by the time your coach
is

is getting ready, I shall be at Lucy le Bois ; rising while he spoke.—“ I won’t be more than two hours before I return,” he went on, “ and perhaps much less ; so adieu,” and away he went.

The moment the door was shut upon the Chevalier, the Marechal drew the Prince to one of the windows, and addressed him in a very low voice.—The Princess approached them, and joined in the conversation.

The Marquis was rather surprised, though he retreated to the other end of the room, to allow them full liberty to converse, without being overheard ; nay, had half a mind to have retired, as he was certainly a restraint upon them ; but while he was debating what to do, feeling himself rather piqued, the Chevalier returned, having changed his hours into minutes.—His entrance broke up the council, and the Prince and Princess hurried to meet him.—He immediately said,

“ The

"The Duke is coming forward; he has sent me word; therefore we may expect him in a very few minutes."

"He is in the Castle," said the Prince, hastening towards the door, but found himself in his son's arms in three seconds.—The Duke had accompanied the Chevalier to the room door, and only waited to let him precede him in.

A profound silence prevailed for half a minute, or more, while the happy father and his son were enfolded in each others arms.—At last the Prince said,

"Oh! my son, I have lived long enough, since I am thus once more blessed; but there is your fond mother, slackening his own embrace, knowing how jealous she was of his being thus before hand with her."

The Duke embraced his mother with the most sincere affection, and then went to one
of

of the windows, to give way to his emotion, before he could speak ; but in looking round, he saw the Marechal, and seemed staggered.

The Chevalier, who had approached him, said, “ I did not chuse to tell your Grace there was company, thinking your joy would be too great to meet so many friends at once.”

The Marechal, who was excessively agitated, felt the greatest wish to embrace his former friend.—He advanced a few steps, and looked at the Duke, who still bore the traces of what he had been, a remarkable handsome man, though he was now one and forty, and had spent the last two and twenty years of his life in close confinement.

His Grace now turned to the Chevalier, saying,

“ Sure my eyes don’t deceive me ; I must know that face.”

“ Then

"Then come to the arms of your old friend d'Ormonville," said the Marechal.

"Oh! thou best of friends," said the Duke hastily, flinging his arms round the Marechal, "to find you thus consoling my beloved parents, is a pleasure indeed.—I have a thousand things to tell you, and as many questions to ask you; but I protest I hardly knew you; and I am sure you would have been in the same predicament with regard to me, had we met by chance."

"Why, I don't think I should have recollect^ded you at the first moment, my dear friend; but allow me now to offer you my sincere congratulations upon your happy, and almost miraculous restoration to your family and friends, after such an absence."

The Chevalier spoke to the same effect, and the Prince and Princess again tried, tho', as they both said, words were very inadequate to express the joy they felt.

During

During this, the Marquis remained in the back ground, unwilling to interrupt the mutual joy of all parties, and being totally unknown to the Duke, he thought it would be impertinent to attempt to congratulate him 'till he was properly introduced to him, and could not help thinking what a different reception he met with from the Duke de Longueville, upon an occasion almost similar.

The Duke de Nemours seemed struck with his fine figure, when he caught sight of him, and bowed to him very politely; then looked at his father, as much as to say, why do not you introduce me to that young stranger; but the Prince and Princess were evidently embarrassed, and looked at the Marechal, who seemed to participate in their confusion, but who now said,

“ Allow me to introduce this young gentleman to your notice, your Grace, taking
the

the Marquis by the hand :—“ My nephew, the Marquis de St. Cernin.”

The Duke de Nemours started, his colour all forsook his cheeks, and he trembled every joint of him, while he looked at the Marquis and the Marechal in turns ; and at last, unable to repress the feelings of his heart, he sprung forward, and caught the Marquis in his arms, saying,

“ Oh ! my son, art thou at last restored to thy enraptured father ; look down, my Alexandrine, and hear me ; swear to revenge thy death, and to punish the author of thine, mine, and our Alphonso’s sufferings.”

The Marquis, almost breathless with surprise, hardly knew whether he was in his senses or not.—The Duke’s emotion did not permit him to doubt of the truth of what he said ; but it was so wonderful, so incomprehensible, that he could hardly fancy he was awake.

He

He almost instinctively, as it were, returned the Duke's tender caresses, while the Prince exclaimed,

" Thank God, Marechal, all your precautions are rendered useless, and we may give way to our affection for our grandson, approaching the Duke and the Marquis, saying, now my joy is complete indeed ; for some days, my dear Lewis, we have known we had a grandson worthy of our ancient name, but were not permitted to make the happiness the discovery gave us public."

" Why, I thought myself wiser than all the world beside," said the Marechal, " and have hitherto kept this young gentleman in total ignorance of his illustrious origin ; and how you came to know he belonged to you, Duke, I cannot conceive ; but I shall not dispute the point with you ; we will think of the proper methods to pursue, to make his birth known, when we have more leisure to attend to business."

The

The Duke again embraced his son, saying, “ I hope my son’s doubts have ceased, and that he will now acknowledge a father who has but very lately known he had such a blessing in store for him.”

The Marquis could only answer by his tears; he felt now he was really restored to a father, and his joy was too great for utterance.

The Chevalier, wishing to give the father and son time to recover from their mutual emotion, said,

“ Did not I tell you, Monseigneur, you had more happiness in store for you than you expected.—I knew the Marquis de St. Cernin was your grandson, though I did not think you had been so wise.”

“ I find mine was become a true comedy secret,” said the Marechal; “ it was known to every body but the person most interested
in

in it ; however, I hope my motives for acting as I have done, will plead my excuse in both the Duke's and his Alphonso's eyes."

The Princess now approached her son and grandson, saying,

" Will my young friend also acknowledge his grandmother, who has suffered very severely from the restraint the Marechal imposed upon her, when he told her whom the Marquis de St. Cernin was.

" Can you doubt it, my dear Madam," said the Marquis ; " I may say I both loved and respected you before this happy discovery took place ; but you shall judge of my heart and sentiments by my actions ; for I never wish to leave this spot."

The good old couple embraced their grandson in turns, and assured his father he would find him all he could wish."

" But

"But now do tell me, my dear Lewis, how you came to know you had a son, and particularly that the Marquis de St. Cernin was him. The Marechal arrived here about a week ago; he came alone; and then, for the first time, divulged the secret of your private marriage with Mademoiselle de Mercoeur, and acknowledged that the reputed son and heir of the Duke de Longueville, was the fruit of that union; therefore, tho' he wished to give us the consolation of knowing we had a grandson, he pointed out to us the impossibility there was of our ever being able to acknowledge him as such; and when the Chevalier left us in search of you, he renewed his cautions to us, thinking, as matters stood, that it would be best to keep both you and your son in ignorance of the relationship between you."

"The Marechal's notions were very just, my dear father," said the Duke; "he did not then know what a villain the Duke de Longueville is—nor that I was spirited away under

under false pretences by that wretch, and have been confined ever since by his orders, and that he dragged my adorable Alexandrine to the altar, knowing her to be my wife.—It was from his emissary I learnt that devoted victim to parental tyranny had left me a son, whom the Duke had sent out of France, to starve, for what he cared, at an age when his helpless innocence would have softened the heart of any man but such a monster as himself: This was done to insure the Mercœur estates to his own child, whose death ought to have convinced him such crimes as his even meet with their punishment in this world.—It was at this epoch he recalled mine, who seemed to have been the peculiar care of Heaven; for when I reflect upon what his situation was, and what it might have been, my heart overflows with gratitude towards the Giver of all Goodness; but do not suppose it was compunction that induced the Duke to restore my son to that rank and affluence he had purposely deprived him of; no, it was to retain his ill-begotten riches, which

which were forfeited, if he had not had an heir."

Every one present seemed petrified and motionless with horror during this short recital.

"Oh! the abandoned villain," exclaimed the Prince, while the tears once more started from his eyes.—"My dear son, what you must have endured; but that wretch will now suffer for his guilt, both in this world and the next; 'till now, I always suspected the late Duke de Mercoeur of being the author of my misery: Nay, I even accused him to his face of being privy to your strange departure; but I ought to have reflected, the Commander d'Ormonville's brother could not have been guilty of so barbarous an action; but Marechal, the Duke, certainly did not know his daughter was already married, when he forced her to give her hand to this vilest of all mortals.—What induced both you and your niece to keep him in the dark,

when you saw what was likely to be the consequence of his remaining in ignorance of her situation, why was not I consulted?"

" What could you have done, my worthy friend," said the Marechal; what power had you over my brother's daughter? Though I rejoice very much to find he was innocent of what we both accused him of, I cannot exculpate him any further; I can only say, like myself, he was ignorant of the Duke de Longueville's villainy, when he forced his ill-fated daughter, knowing too of her other engagements, into his arms; but thank God that abominable wretch will now pay dear for all his criminal plots and vile actions; bad as I have ever thought him to be, I could not have supposed him guilty of half the crimes the Duke has enumerated."

" Oh! that I should ever call such a monster father," said the Marquis.

The

The Duke again caught his son in his arms, saying, “ he certainly was unworthy such a blessing, my dear Alphonso ; but I wish to drop all disagreeable reflections for to night.”

They all agreed that it was best to postpone any future explanations ’till morning ; and as the Duke and Chevalier had neither of them supped, a few things were brought into the room ; for the Prince and Princess could not bear the thoughts of losing sight of their son : Their meal was soon finished, and the Prince took his seat at the table between his son and grandson, saying,

“ Now I can even look down upon the greatest monarchs :—To have both my children thus restored to me almost at the same moment, is more than I ever dared expect.”

L 2

“ Pray,

"Pray, Chevalier," said the Duke, "why did not you tell me the Marechal and my son were at Souvigny during our drive here."

"Because I did not know it myself, your Grace, 'till I arrived; and when I came out to you, I did not chuse to add to your agitation, by informing you your son was with your father, so I e'en left the discovery to chance, and she did the work as well as I should have done."

"Had I known you were so wise as you were, Duke," said the Marechal, "I think I should have kept your son out of your way for to night, or at least have prepared you rather more for the sight of him; but while you are in the humour, as you no doubt now are to grant favours, permit me to ask one."

"You have conferred ten thousand upon me," said the Duke; "therefore I grant it without reserve, before I know what you wish,

wish, and will pledge you into the bargain," filling his glass while he spoke.

"Then promise never to contradict your son in his choice of a wife."

"If my son's sentiments are the same as when he left Wielbourg," said the Duke, "he cannot oblige me more than by leading Alphonsine de Cheylus to the altar to-morrow."

The Marquis, transported beyond measure to find every obstacle to his union with Alphonsine thus razed, for he did not doubt of obtaining Baron Wielbourg's consent now, rose hastily, and caught his father's hand, which he raised to his lips in silence; then said, "I won't attempt to thank you, my dear father; I will only try to prove myself worthy of such generous kindness."

"The Prince said, "he must ask a few more questions; for I am very curious to know

knew when you arrived, my dear Lewis, and where you came from."

" I arrived at the Chevalier's, my dear father, between four and five o'clock this afternoon, and after having almost frightened him out of his senses, I made him set out with me upon our road hither.—I alighted about two miles from the Castle, afraid I might have rushed into your presence too soon, had I come in with the Chevalier; and though I walked very slow, I was at the gate long before he came out."

" Why, as we came all the way with my horses," said the Chevalier, and did not stop to bait them, the poor creatures were not very lively, when they came to the conclusion of their journey."

" I should have wondered if they had," said the Prince, " considering the distance they had come in so short a time; but I know enough for the present, and I won't

keep the company up any longer ; for I am sure, my dear Lewis, you want rest more than I do."

So, soon after twelve, the Prince, Princess, and the Marquis, accompanied the Duke into the apartment that had been prepared for him :—But the father and son could not so soon separate ; the Duke was happy when he had got his Alphonso all to himself ; he wanted to ask him a thousand questions he did not like to put to him in company, and no answer afforded him so much satisfaction as when the Marquis assured him he had never felt any regard for his supposed father, though he had frequently taken himself to task upon that subject.—The Marquis would have liked to have put a few questions in his turn ; but as he knew he should learn every thing he wished to know the next day, he suspended his curiosity, for fear of fatiguing his father, and about two o'clock they separated for the night.

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